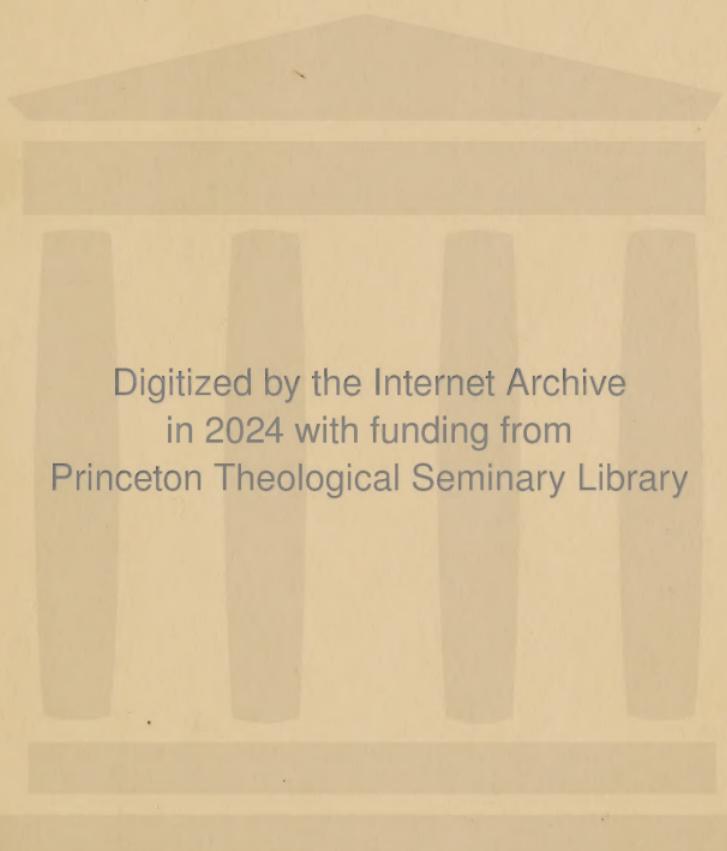


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I was a monk



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I Was a Monk

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I Was a Monk

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

John Tettener

EDITED BY

Janet Mabie

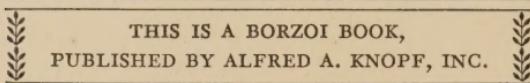
WITH A FOREWORD BY *Jean Burden* AND

AN INTRODUCTION BY *John Burton*



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THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK,
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FIRST AND SECOND PRINTING BEFORE PUBLICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

to the saintly mother who bore me.

to Ruth, the mother of my children.

and to the Great Mother of All.

Acknowledgment

I WISH to express my warmest personal gratitude to all the many friends who gave my husband help and encouragement in the writing of his autobiography.

My gratitude also goes to Herbert Weinstock for his recognition of the importance and timeliness of this work, and especially to my friend Janet Mabie for bringing the manuscript to light and for her patient, capable, and understanding work as its editor.

RUTH TETTEMER

Foreword

THIS IS THE BOOK John Tettemer wrote in a tiny adobe house on a high mesa in the desert, in a seclusion not unlike the monk's cell he was remembering and re-creating. It is a book that his friends and family had begged him for years to write. It came hard, for he was an honest man, and he would not dramatize. It is the chronicle of how a man spent twenty-five years as a monk in the Roman Catholic Church and then walked out because he lost his belief in creed and dogma. It is a story no one will ever forget, just as no one who knew him will ever forget the author.

"John the Divine" we always called him, jokingly, irreverently, and with profound affection. It was easy to laugh with John, for he never wore his halo. The goodness in him was as real and strong as in a tree. I can see him walking toward us with quick, small steps as though pushing back a monk's robe with his feet, his massive head, with its plume of white hair blown in the wind, balancing a tall, powerfully built frame, his arms outstretched to embrace us. "You look so holy today, John," we would tease. And he would reply with a twinkle: "I can't help it—I just washed my hair."

He was the father of us all, young and old, treating us with that rare love and respect which spring from a heart completely without vanity. It is not enough to say he was humble, for that somehow implies meekness, and the word did not fit him. He simply had no sense of self-importance, and he was as direct and enthusiastic and curious as a healthy child.

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An expert athlete, an equally skillful chess-player, he was as much at home with people as with solitude. He went out of his way to visit sick and elderly friends (though he admitted it was hard work), or the Passionist fathers at the neighboring retreat in Sierra Madre, who loved him dearly and never ceased to pray for him.

He spent hours walking over the hills in faded blue denims and white shirt, with Timber, the dog, at his heels. And he read everything he could lay his hands on, from medieval philosophic treatises to modern political thought and the latest hair-raising mystery. He was always consulting the dictionary. Once he wrote to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* politely pointing out certain errors they had made.

I shall never forget the evenings we spent in front of the fire in his rustic redwood house on the hilltop, all of us wrestling vigorously with some philosophic point that seemed terribly important at the time. Ruth, his wife, as tall as he, lean and tanned and beautiful in slacks and plaid shirt, would be darning the family socks. Eve, the oldest child, was often sketching in the big chair, artist's materials strewn around her. Joneen (the musical one) and young John were always parading through on private business, while the rest of us sat on the floor and ate apples and salted nuts and tried to unravel some of the tangles of the universe. John's voice would take on a slight stutter as he became stimulated by the arguments, and his hands would stir the white hair until it stood out like a nimbus in the firelight. It was then that we learned in snatches about his years as a monk, and more still about his peregrinations—literal and philosophic—since then.

If John had lived a little longer, perhaps he would have written the sequel to this book, telling us what he found in the world after he shut the gate of the monastery be-

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hind him. Perhaps he would have described how he fell in love with and married the young English girl, thirty years his junior, and how they came to Hollywood in 1928. He might have told about his three children, and how easily parenthood became him. "It's probably a fact, unprovable but fascinating," he once said with a grin, "that ex-monks make the best fathers!"

The economic problem was sometimes easily solved, as when he owned and managed an apartment building, and later two wine stores—and sometimes difficult, as during the Depression. After all, the qualifications of an ex-monk are rather hard to utilize in a world with nine million unemployed. In 1934 the Tettemers moved up to the mountains behind Beverly Hills, and John found work in pictures, his most interesting roles being in *Lost Horizon* and *Meet John Doe*. During those years many famous people climbed the hill to see John—Marguerite D'Alvarez, Amelita Galli-Curci and her husband, John Burton, Will Durant, Lloyd Douglas, Pearl Buck, Karl Menninger, and a host of others. During the war he tackled something new again—a news program for radio. And later, always interested in science, he went into bacteriology, growing cultures for yoghurt. His office was naturally referred to by the children, as "the bughouse."

Through it all, John was searching—searching for the fullness of faith, the truth he once thought he had found, the conviction he had lost. It was an odyssey that led him to study and consider most of the religious movements one can name. For years he could not get over the feeling that someone somewhere must know more of God, more of the answers. Only toward the end of his life did he come to the conclusion that the search itself was the important thing, and that man would never solve the mystery of eternity with his little, finite brain.

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His voice comes clearly to me. Ruth was poking the logs, and John was leaning forward and gesticulating with his big hands. "God is far more wonderful than we can know except in flashes—the mystics have glimpsed a little more than we—and life itself is more beautiful in reality than we can ever realize on this earth!"

He had become a man who was content to live with the questions. Did he, then, lose his faith? Or did he gain a wider vision?

When he was dying, he was asked if he wanted a priest. "Good heavens, no!" was his hearty reply. It was no blasphemy against the priest or the Church, but only his honest protest against the easy absolution. He would make his own peace with God. We who knew him are quite sure that he has, and that wherever his short quick steps are taking him now, he still stops to uncover the curious stone or turn the odd-shaped leaf.

JEAN BURDEN

Introduction

A GREAT American scholar, a dean in one of our major universities once said to me: "A John Tettemer should be living on every campus in this country—not with classes to teach as a professor of other men's philosophies, but as a living philosopher, a living touchstone, to kindle in everyone the fires of adventure and search."

Once in a whole lifetime, if you are very fortunate, you meet someone in whom nature has contrived a rare blend of jovial, infectious good humor that seems to spring from an excess of physical vitality with that elusive, informed simplicity of the great scholar who, with singleness of purpose, seeks only the truth. A child gathering pebbles on an endless shore.

When you happen on such an individual you soon become aware that all who know him try to make him their father confessor while they warm their spiritual hands at the inner fires of his generous soul. There he sits, listening patiently, intently, with all his superb faculties, to problem stories out of the human kindergarten, or again to the hair-splitting intellects of confused or cynical experts who seem incapable of relating their strangely assorted findings to the immediate historical problems of living man.

Friend of everyone, infinitely vulnerable to any and every appeal, at home equally in castle or cottage, peer of the best minds, yet bending with such grace to the level of the unenlightened that no accommodating gesture is noticed—such a man, tall, powerful, with magnificent head and aureole of white hair, weatherbeaten lines of

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experience in a broad, smiling, Irish face—such a man was John Tettemer. Expert mountain-climber, skater, skier, and tennis-player, chess enthusiast, voracious reader of everything new in non-fiction and anything exciting in murder mysteries, a stickler for accuracy and for the correct use of words, vigorous individualist and champion of justice and American democracy, he seemed to fill the air around him with the heartiest and most infectious laughter that I have ever heard.

When I first saw John Tettemer he was talking to a small and habitually solemn audience about religion. His message was simple, direct, and undogmatic, punctuated, whenever he felt that his listeners were straining too hard or retiring into their wonted overseriousness, by a kind of ringing musical mirth that few of us ever bring to human relationships of any kind, let alone to the lecture hall. After that day I heard much of that laughter, which I came to recognize as the living hallmark of a man who loved God through his fellow men.

Nowhere was that laughter more at home, more appropriately framed, than when it rang out in the vast stillness of the desert. And it was to those silent, sundrenched spaces that he retired for a period to write the story of his life. In a small adobe cottage at Rancho Yucca Loma, near Victorville, John Tettemer finally undertook the task of retracing his long life back to childhood and re-living in memory its fascinating drama. Here in this book, and much more in the living reality of the life it reflects, is a call, especially to those who count themselves students of religion and worshippers of God, to a new possibility of unity of understanding—a challenge to put aside the everlasting disputes over nonessentials and to reaffirm belief in our common humanity—our kinship with each other and with God.

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John never looked back with regret at the decisions he had made. Through the many years of his life in the world, as business man, husband, and dearly loved father of a family, the quest for truth was to remain his. As he faced death a few hours before his passing, a friend who had many times discussed philosophy with him over the chessboard came to say farewell. Like a player who is giving checkmate, John remarked: "Soon perhaps I shall know some of the real answers to the eternal questions." The old merry twinkle was in his eyes as if he were saying to his friend: "I'm still a move ahead of you."

To read these pages but once is to see as in a shaft of sunlight the bright road that the great in heart have always traveled in their search for truth. To travel that road oneself, and learn to love it, with the author as friend and companion, is a great and rewarding experience.

JOHN BURTON

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JOHN TETTEMER

"... at Rancho Yucca Loma, near Victorville . . ."

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I Was a Monk



I

In the immemorial way of this great occasion every spring, the church was filled with flowers and music and lights. First Communion is the great day in a Catholic child's life, and the ceremony is surrounded with all the beauty and pomp the Church can give.

I was nine years old and had completed my special instruction. As the day drew near, my mother took me to downtown St. Louis on an errand that was important too. Each of us felt in our way rather quiet, a little keyed up. On the way Mother said what was, to a boy's heart, a sweet thing: "John, I will make you all new and clean on the outside. You must do all you can on the inside to make yourself ready to receive our Lord." We went then and bought an outfit of complete new clothing for me.

I made my general confession and marched with the others down the aisle to the pews reserved for us.

The altar blazed with points of golden light. Banks of white lilies quivered gently under the vibration of the solemn music poured forth by the great organ. I felt awed by what was happening to me. Enclosing my face in my hands, I asked God please to make my soul clean and pure and worthy to receive His Son.

After I received my first communion I told Our Lord again that I loved Him. I could feel Him in my heart. I felt very happy.

John Tettener

My parents made a fine combination. My father, Harvey Tettener, was Pennsylvania Dutch and Presbyterian. My mother, Nora Moynihan, was County Kerry Irish Catholic, from Cloughnareeny, a place not important or even large enough for sophisticated maps of the world to show.

In the children of this union, six in all, the Celt lent wings to the Teuton, the Teuton gave stability to the Celt. In the arena of my own consciousness thought and emotion, mind and intuition were always carrying on their merry wars. Now the Irish would win a campaign, again the Nordic. I could not foresee that one day the battle would be between an enthusiastic idealism of youth and the skeptical intellectualism of maturity. But the soldier's first and last armor is his courage.

My memory is of the happiest of early years, in the bosom of a harmonious family. As they do to most families, sorrows came to us, and incidental changes of fortune; but even adversity only strengthened the ties in a family where abided mutual love and a living religious faith.

Mother had come to America with her father and many brothers when she was fourteen years old. I knew her as one of those dark-complexioned Irishwomen, short, plumpish, full of spirited good humor and laughter, and endless human kindness and compassion. She was a born story-teller. Her mother was a Connor of County Cork; telling us tales of Roderick, last high King of Ireland, she made us feel that it was exciting, but no cause for thinking ourselves better than anyone else, to be able to claim descent from him.

Stories that she told her children of her own earlier life had a way of meandering like a stream through lush meadowland. Every once in a while she would catch her-

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self; her bright brown eyes would twinkle and, laying a finger thoughtfully against the side of her nose, she would say: "Now—where was I?" Yet there was a still, pool-like depth in her nature too, an inner spirit and confident peace seeming to be above the happenings of time and made by her faithful communings with God in mystical prayer, which was the mainspring of her life.

Father was a lineal descendant of a pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania Dutch family. He was a tall, strong, somewhat stern man, reared a Presbyterian, who remained a good Protestant until a few years after he married Nora Moynihan. He did not come over to the Catholic faith until he had concentrated his excellent mind on a careful study of the whole controversy between the two forms of Christian belief.

As not infrequently happens with converts by conviction, he became a superlatively devout member and defender of the Church and enjoyed nothing so much as an argument in its behalf. In those days religion played a deeper part in men's lives than later. The convert often outstripped the born Catholic in enthusiasm, doubtless because, having studied and accepted Catholic doctrine with a mature mind rather than taking it for granted from childhood, he has a fuller realization of the meaning and implications of his faith.

The atmosphere of our home was strongly religious. As children my brothers and sisters and I drew rather robustly on that fact in our play, and it was fortunate at times that our mother had a natural sense of humor.

My first recollection of a game is playing priest and hearing my playmates' confessions through the cane bottom of an overturned chair. The oldest brother, Harvey, would play at saying Mass and rigged up an altar in the back parlor, with candles and flowers and such linens as

he could beg or remove surreptitiously from Mother's linen cupboard. He wore a set of vestments made out of newspaper, going through the service mumbling to himself and at intervals turning to us to say his version of *Dominus vobiscum*. He had difficulty, however, when it came to persuading his congregation to take the wafer, prepared in pats of hot candle grease dropped into a cup of water. I was his altar boy. My duty was to swing the censer, made of a tin can containing hot water, which I replenished whenever the steam ("smoke") died down.

Once Heaven took occasion to let us know that it was not altogether satisfied with our defective arrangements. The lace curtains at the back of the altar caught fire from a candle; by the time the flames could be extinguished the whole affair was reduced to ruins. My mother's calm comment was: "Whisht now, will ye learn to be more careful?"

Father was a shoemaker by trade. Before any of their children were born he took Mother to live in St. Louis, where he established himself as a pioneer in shoe-manufacture. He was the first man to bring shoe machinery west of the Mississippi River and a leader in the industry that was to make St. Louis one of the largest shoe-producing centers in the world.

As the children were born, names for them were matters of waiting and prayer. The first-born, named Samuel for his paternal grandfather, died in his second or third year. The oldest I remember was a sister, named Mary Theresa after Our Lady and my mother's favorite saint, the great Spanish mystic.

When a boy came along next, there was a problem in naming him. My father thought well of Harvey, after himself; my mother insisted on Joseph, for she was especially devoted to the foster-father of Jesus; especially

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grateful too, for she often called on him for help in finding the things she was forever mislaying around the house. But they resolved their problem—I have the impression that the Irish always win in the end—the child was christened Joseph Harvey. We all called him Harvey, and so he remained until he became a secular priest, when it seemed only proper—sounding less pagan—to call him Father Joe.

Nora came next, a beautiful, fairylike redhead. In those days red hair was not held in such esteem as it would be later and, because even a fairy can be quick-tempered if it is an Irish fairy, it was necessary in her presence to speak of her as auburn-haired.

On May 16, 1876 my turn came. John Moynihan they christened me: the John for St. John the Baptist, and also for a gallant maternal grandfather; the Moynihan to carry on the name of a clan that is legion in County Kerry.

Frank came last and was named after the great seraphic saint of Assisi, with the middle name of Louis, after a favorite uncle of our father's. But here again the Irish really won. Father wanted the boy's name to be Francis Firman, for that was the uncle's name; the Louis was added to it only in middle life, when he was baptized into the Catholic Church. But, cried Nora Moynihan, "We'll be having no more of pagan ways in this family; the boy will take the middle name of Louis straight off." And that was the way it was.

No matter how often my mother told them, her stories of Ireland were a fine joy to me as a child. The atmosphere of our family was reverential; my father always said grace before and after meals, and most of the time we had night prayers all together; so it did not tax our imaginations when our mother told of walking to church

John Tettemer

barefooted over the country roads, carrying her shoes in her hand to save them, only putting them on when she reached the church door.

She would laugh heartily as she told of her stubborn efforts to get an education from an old schoolmaster, Tim Finnegan, who gathered children together surreptitiously in an old barn and taught them.

Sometimes her stories made us cry with pity, especially when she told how her upstanding, well-to-do farmer father, John Moynihan, lost his cattle and all his land. He had endorsed a friend's note; when the note came due, the friend could not pay and my grandfather had to make good. Before I was old enough to understand the legal and moral point involved, I shouted childish maledictions at the picture she drew in words of the official who came and drove off Grandfather's cattle, and I made up my mind that when I grew up I would go over and fight the English for all they had done to my mother's father, who had only helped a friend. With the last of his money he gathered up his ten children, who by this time were motherless, and brought them to America, to remake his fortune in the land of promise.

My mother's lively Irish imagination let nothing be lost in the tale of a harrowing three months on a sailing vessel crossing the Atlantic. Thunder and lightning and gigantic storms were the least of it, the ship being driven far off course, and her passengers never expecting to see land again. She could make us shiver and feel sopping wet as she described immense waves breaking over the deck, smashing portholes, tearing down rigging. Every time she told the story, something new was added, something changed that we had heard before; we never tired of it, and though we corrected her strictly, we loved the variations.

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Among the lot of us, however warlike my own intentions, it was my brother Harvey who took the cause of Ireland and the wrongs done her seriously to heart and did something about it. In the dramatic plays we were constantly giving, it was always he who was the Irishman, and I—stout partisan of my father—who was cast as the American. Our nationalistic feelings reached such a pitch, I remember, that once when our play was about our Grandfather's terrible sea voyage and we were inside a large packing-case in the back garden which served as a ship on the high seas, I asked Harvey, as the ship rocked from side to side and imaginary waves tossed us roughly about, whither we were bound.

"To Ireland!" he cried. "To avenge great wrongs!"

"Let me out of this ship!" I screeched, scandalized.
"I'll never go Irishman! Never!"

I never saw any signs of favoritism on the part of our parents for their children, but as the years went on I gathered the impression that my mother's favorite boy was Harvey and that I was the favorite of my father. To me he was a quick man—quick in movement and temper, a brisk walker, a man who snapped his jaw when it was necessary to make a decision or close an argument, quick and strict to insist on honesty and truth, no matter what the cost. As a child I felt somewhat awed by him, but later the simplicity of his sense of honor and justice was to appeal to me poignantly.

His factory was at Twelfth Street and Franklin Avenue. A pioneering business will sail along smoothly for a while and then the competitions that its daring has brought into being will begin to assert themselves, producing new problems of growth. The first time I became aware of Jews as people coincided with one of these periods. My father was unable to secure from the usual sources capital

he needed to put into the business. He was able to obtain from Morris Levi a loan which, because Mr. Levi respected my father's character and took his word for his bond, was unsecured. Father used the incident to instill in us some understanding of a people that had experienced harsh tribulations throughout its history, and to lay on us the precept of judging men as individuals and children of God, not accepting ready-made, often prejudiced estimates.

During the period of straits in the business my mother decided that, though her family needed her in the home, at the moment our father needed her in his factory also. She found a stand-by woman to keep us in line at home and went in as forewoman of the sewing girls at the machines. She often took me with her to the factory, where I loved to listen to the whir of the machinery, to watch the cutters and lasters working with exciting skill and speed. When things caught up with me, mother would take a minute to bed me down on a great pile of leather so I could sleep. The smell of good leather became a favorite with me.

In the early years of childhood I had a defect of speech that made it difficult for me to pronounce certain combinations of consonants. I was sensitive about it and, in the presence of others than the family, shy and silent. If anyone made fun of me or corrected me I burst into tears; it made me very much ashamed, but I couldn't seem to help it. Sometimes my brothers and sisters guyed me about it, for there is a streak of natural animal cruelty in children; it would drive me off into a corner from which I would listen like a small ghost to a story being told, or would lose myself in some book. Sometimes the others cried: "Softy!" at me and, in the curious alchemy characteristic of children, it helped to make me sensitive to

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emotional appeals, in music, in tales of heroism and pathos, and to beauty in color. Also it equipped me with a spontaneous sympathy for the feelings of others, whether human beings or animals, and with a sense of the utter wrongness of doing anything that may hurt.

As the years went by, the speech defect grew less; during my school years it bothered me only occasionally; but the fear of it ran deep and I became adept at substituting easier words for those which were difficult for me. I have sometimes thought that even for those suffering from no actual speech defect it is a good plan to imagine one once in a while; it may well help to increase the vocabulary!

In view of the speech defect and the accompanying painful shyness, I was not sent to school until I was over eight years old. Meanwhile I was taught to read by a governess, named Maria, a cultured woman who had for a time been a member of some religious order of nuns and whom we children casually described among ourselves as "the old maid." Actually we all loved her. It was difficult for her to cope with life outside the convent again, and for a number of years she found safe harbor in the life of our family. I felt a special indebtedness to her because it was she who initiated me into the boundless horizons of reading.

I was an extremely greedy reader. Anything and everything that told a story was my meat. Much of what I got hold of was beyond my years at the time, but that made no difference to me. Most of Dickens I read before I was twelve—skipping the descriptive parts, of course! Matters arose that I had to puzzle out as best I could. For instance, what were "reinforcements," as mentioned in the life of Washington? I pieced together the impression that when reinforcements were brought up, things be-

came better for our side; but I was at a loss to visualize them.

Captain Marryat, Jules Verne, Tom Brown, Jesse James and the Younger brothers, the dramatis personæ of the *Arabian Nights*, Grimm's fairy tales, Andersen's too—all these I assimilated indiscriminately. My favorite, I think, was *John Halifax, Gentleman*. The love for stories—as time went on, mystery and detective stories preferred—was to remain with me and in later years to stir many a rebuke from an alert conscience.

Because my mother had only had so little and such elementary education in Ireland, and my father had completed only grammar school (though his burning zest for knowledge made him a student and a great reader throughout his life), no supervision was exerted over my reading and I browsed at will in our rather full library, of which my father was very proud. The result was that many books I should have read as a child I missed; many I read too soon or should never have read at all.

I was a bookworm who liked plenty of outdoor exercise, however. I played a fierce brand of baseball in days when catchers' masks and mitts, had they been obtainable, would have been ludicrous affectations. A game of tennis (or, indoors, towering problem in chess) would always tempt me to run away from even important work or a duty. A bookworm is typically supposed not to indulge in games, and the athlete to have no use for reading. It seemed to me very fortunate that the crossing in me of Celt and Teuton made certain that I would always be a stranger to loneliness.

When I finally did go to school I was put under the care of the Christian Brothers, in the parish school of St. Bridget's. For a while I was an easy mark among the older boys. Learning that I was simple, trusting, and in-

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experienced, they proceeded, with the callousness of youth, to make sport of me. I shall never forget one instance.

The boy with whom I sat had a ring with a red stone, which I envied him. He assured me that I could get all I wanted of such rings, as a man came to a certain place about a mile from the school and dumped a wagonload of them every day. This seemed to me a happy recurrence of the story of Aladdin and his lamp, and after school I hurried off to the vacant lot, where I searched the rubbish like a ferret. I failed to find not only all the rings I should have liked, but even so much as one. The thought occurred to me that I had come too late, that others had been there before me and I must come another time, hoping for better luck. That day I was late getting home, and it seemed best to keep the reason to myself.

At school the next day I told my seat-mate how others had made off with the treasure before I got to the vacant lot.

"Sure," he said in a lordly way, "you should've known that. You have to get there first."

I was off like a hound the instant school let out. There was hardly a breath left in me when I got to the dumping ground, but I flung myself on the rubbish, praying that I would find a ring. When I had to give up and get home for supper, I was tired and a little discouraged, but the idea of a hoax never entered my head.

Harvey was curious. "Why'd you leg it off after school?" he asked. "Where'd you go?"

I had to tell somebody. First he laughed; then he explained a fact of life to me: that a trusting nature does not always move one's playmates to protectiveness.

At school next morning I examined my seat-mate when he was not looking. I know now that he could have been

the model for one of Fra Angelico's cherubs. We never spoke of the treasure hoard again. I have often wondered what *his* reason was.

The Brothers were excellent teachers and we were stoutly drilled in the fundamentals of learning. I was not precocious, but I had a feeling for study, especially of grammar and mathematics, and usually managed to be first in my class. We didn't study so many subjects as pupils of our age would later, but I see now that we were better grounded in essentials than present-day youngsters. The Brothers were kindly in their treatment of the boys, but they were strict disciplinarians too and had no soft objection to using the cane if necessary to enforce order and obedience.

I was prepared by special instruction to make my first communion. We had been impressed by our parents at home with stories of the dire consequences of making a bad communion. There was one terrifying tale, supposedly revealed to one of the saints, of the endless tortures in hell of a man who, as a boy, had made a bad first communion by concealing a sin in making his preparatory confession. He was always ashamed thereafter to acknowledge it in confession and when he died was condemned for it to unspeakable torments in hell-fire for all eternity.

The Catholic believes without reservation that in some miraculous way beyond his understanding Jesus Christ, as living God and man, really and truly enters into his soul when he receives the Eucharist. Consequently the greatest sacrilege of which he can be guilty is approaching the altar in a state of sin, and this is called making a bad communion. Although I have been told of children whose young hearts were torn with fear through their religious training, mine was certainly not. God was a father to me always, to whom I ran in all my difficulties.

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Confession, I must admit, was somewhat burdensome to me, because of the time and care needed to prepare for it, by "examination of conscience." I was burdened by the idea that I might forget some of my sins. I knew I had never coveted my neighbor's wife (whatever that might mean!) nor defrauded laborers of their wages. Nevertheless I slaved over the list of sins that are printed in the prayer books to assist the memory in recalling one's transgressions. I always found that the light-hearted feeling of joy that filled me after it was over made the trouble of reading worth while.

(In the light of later experience it has often seemed strange to me that no one ever thought of making up a list of children's sins, to aid them in the painful process of examination of conscience. Counting up the number of sins and the number of times each has been committed, and holding the whole in memory long enough to tell the priest accurately, is something of a mathematical feat to children, perhaps the most difficult part of confession, inasmuch as exactness is drilled into them.)

Telling lies of excuse and disobedience to parents and teachers usually made up the bulk of my sinfulness. I often pondered what old people had to confess, since their grown-up status made them free to do as they liked, so that they were not practically forced into what, for children, were sins. The law of the Church, of course, is simple enough, requiring only reasonable diligence in the examination of conscience, condemning only the willful concealing of a mortal sin in confession. But my young mind was incapable of theological subtleties; the distinction between mortal and venial sins was a theological nicety beyond me, and I struggled and strained for mathematical exactness.

. . .

To participants and spectators alike, the setting in Catholic churches for the service of first communion, in the spring, is beautiful and touching. Boys and girls have been carefully drilled to march in reverent procession down the center aisle, to genuflect as one, and to proceed in orderly fashion to pews assigned them. The girls especially, walking a little apart, dressed all in white and wearing wreaths of flowers on their heads, are a lovely sight as with demure bearing and serious faces they walk slowly to the solemn music. The church is decorated with many flowers, and the altar ablaze with the lighted candles and great banks of white lilies. This is the crowning day of a long preparation and cannot but leave an indelible impression on young souls. Amid the solemn and beautiful setting of flowers and lights and music it is not difficult to believe, even to feel, that God really visits the hearts of His children as they draw near to the sacred table, receiving with uplifted faces the consecrated Host from the hands of the priest.

By the time I was fourteen I had finished the regular course at St. Bridget's and a supplementary year of English, Latin, algebra, and geometry, which might be considered an abridged high-school course according to present-day standards. I had thoroughly enjoyed school and had acquired a love for knowledge which would never leave me.

At home I continued to read as assiduously as always, but now I was somewhat less promiscuous in my choice of books, for I had learned to be selective. About this time I became friends with the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and developed the habit of opening a volume just anywhere for the sheer joy of learning something. I had

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studied no physics as yet, but an article on air-brakes was almost as appealing to me as the story of Don Quixote.

School finished in June. The Brother Superior of St. Bridget's told my parents that I should try for a scholarship in the Jesuit college called St. Louis University. These scholarships were given to boys from one of the city's parochial schools who led in a competitive examination conducted in August. With pride the Brother Superior pointed out that St. Bridget's stood highest in the city and, as I had finished first in my class, I could easily win the scholarship. As Catholic education was not free, and the education of several children in a family could be quite a financial burden, my parents felt that this was a God-sent opportunity for the completion of my education.

The future looked very black to me. I disliked examinations. Such as I had passed successfully had not left me with any feeling of self-confidence. I was not interested in any future studies, and the idea of an examination in competition with pupils representing the whole city appalled me. To have to take it was the last thing in the world I wanted. The most dreadful part was that I did not feel I could tell anyone how I felt.

As I had done in other years, I spent the vacation months on the farm of a childless uncle and aunt over in Montgomery County, about ninety miles from St. Louis. I enjoyed myself there, riding horseback full-tilt over the countryside and helping with the chores. I loved threshing time, when all the neighbors came to help; the men threshed the grain, and their wives helped my aunt prepare the most colossal dinners I have ever known. There I earned my first real money, as distinct from bribes received at home. I would sit on top of the great thresher

and keep the oats, sometimes damp and inclined to stick, flowing through the chute. The owner paid me half a dollar for my day's work and I felt proud and manly.

But when I had to hold young pigs while my uncle branded them by making a hole in the ear with a sharp die, the softy in me came out. When the wriggling creatures squealed pitifully, I felt like an accessory to murder. My uncle tried to persuade me that they screamed only because they were frightened at being held. "See?" he said; "they aren't hurt; the minute you let them go, they stop squealing." But I was not convinced and knew I would never make a good farmer. To take the taste out of my mouth literally, when we finished with the pigs my uncle would take me to the melon patch, where he split a vine-ripened watermelon with his scythe and I calmed down while we devoured it between us.

But I had time to think with a gnawing dread of the impending examination. I well knew that I could expect no human help, so I turned several times a day to that person who always had been my refuge in trouble, often proving Her power and willingness to help me. From as far back as I could remember, Mary the mother of Jesus had been dear to me, almost as near and real as my own mother. I went to Her for aid in many childish needs and difficulties, and my devotion to Her grew with the years. I had Her statue in my room and kept flowers constantly before it; on Her feast days and during the whole month of May I kept a light burning on Her little altar. I never missed saying a few Ave Marias in Her honor during my morning and evening prayers, and I was enrolled as a Child of Mary in Her society, wearing Her scapular as a badge of my love and devotion. And so now I prayed with fervor and confidence that, working a miracle, She would somehow relieve me of the ordeal of the examination.

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The day for my return home drew near, and I redoubled my prayers. In Her blessed time and way they were answered by Our Lady.

At the last minute my parents sent word that my elder brother had expressed the desire to become a priest, and the Jesuits had awarded him a scholarship. It would look like greediness if I were to receive one also. I was overjoyed, but remembered to give all the credit to Our Lady.

On my return from the country Father informed me that he had obtained a job for me as office boy in the John L. Boland Book & Stationery Company on Washington Avenue, across from the old Lindell Hotel. He pointed out to me that every boy, before finishing his education, should have the opportunity of learning the value of a dollar in the hard school of business. To me the salary, fifteen dollars a month, was magnificent. My midday meal in a near-by restaurant cost me fifteen cents. When I placed my pay envelope in my mother's hands, I felt terribly proud.

Our home was about two miles from the office. I worked from seven in the morning till six in the evening, and when the weather was good walked both ways.

My duties were to file correspondence, copy letters and address them, and run errands. Soon I was promoted to the rather responsible position of city bill clerk and cashier. Boland's was the largest wholesale bookstore west of Chicago and also had a large retail business. I handled all the charge and cash accounts for this local trade. It was fine training in exactness for me, as I had to balance my books and each evening render an accounting to the head cashier for hundreds of dollars received during the day. My taste for mathematics, my thorough training in school, and the feeling of importance the job gave me stood me in good stead; I became lightning quick at

figures and could add up columns a foot or two long with ease and accuracy. Had the store owned such a thing as an adding machine, I would have checked up on it!

Though a large and prosperous firm, and a friendly concern to work for, Boland's was known for its long hours and low wages. This combination landed me in difficulty with my conscience. What happened sheds light on the working of the confessional in a Catholic life.

On many days the rush of business threw much of my bookkeeping to one side, and I was often kept till seven or eight o'clock to catch up. Naturally, a boy of fourteen would become hungry, and I got in the habit of sending an assistant to a barroom next door for a couple of sandwiches for us. I paid for them out of the cash drawer and charged them on the books under expenses.

I had no authorization for this small expenditure of company money, but in the beginning I thought it only the natural thing to do and had no qualms of conscience. The firm gave us thirty-five cents for supper when we did what was called night work and stayed till ten o'clock; but no provision was made if we needed to stay only a couple of hours.

After a while my conscience began to nudge me. I told the priest in confession what I had been doing, but perhaps without too clear an explanation of the circumstances.

"My son," he said severely, "you have been stealing from that company. You must stop it at once and make restitution for all the money you have used for this purpose."

As I know now, the priest's word in confession is law—unless you get another to see the case differently. But I had no knowledge of this delicate canonical process, so I was put in the embarrassing position of paying back an

indefinite but to me large sum of money, which moreover I did not have, inasmuch as I gave all my wages to my mother. In my predicament I told the whole story to my father, together with the priest's verdict that I was guilty of stealing.

My father's understanding sympathy was a prodigious relief to me. We figured out that the amount I should turn back might come to nearly fifty dollars. To be on the safe side, making sure that the debt was paid in full, Father sent the firm seventy-five dollars, in such a way that no one would know from whom it came. This secrecy he achieved by the expedient of sending the sum without explanation in a plain envelope on his next buying trip to the East. As for me, he approved my eating properly when I had to work late, and instructed me to keep enough money out of my wages to do so.

I loved my father for not flying into a temper over what I had done, for he hated so much as the shadow of dishonesty; but he made me feel that, if he did not condone it, at least he could understand why a boy would think in the circumstances that what he did was not wrong. I discussed with my father an idea that had occurred to me: that the priest might have advised me to explain the situation to Mr. Boland and get his authorization for the practice. He was a kindly but very strict business man, who knew nothing of the hardships of late hours for the simple reason that he was driven home to Clayton, a residential suburb, at three o'clock each afternoon. It seemed to me that he should hardly expect me to work ten hours a day for him for fifty cents a day and, out of those meager wages, pay for the food to carry me an extra two hours. I always hoped that the recording angel put to my father's credit the seventy-five dollars "conscience money" he returned to Mr. Boland.

After a couple of years I was promoted to wholesale billing, where I made out invoices for goods shipped to all parts of the country. The bills often contained several hundred items, each with its own price and, frequently, complex discounts, such as sixty, three tens, five per cent off the list price of slates in large quantities, and so on. The extension of these items and the totaling of the whole required rapid and accurate work, and my invoices for a week or two were checked over by the head bill clerk, an old mathematical wizard named Scott. Evidently he had spent his whole life from the cradle on at this sort of work.

I acquired a tremendous capacity for concentration through this work. Our desks were in the midst of the order and packing departments, with shouting and general noise going on around us all the day through. I was to find the experience of enormous use when it came time for advanced study.

But perhaps the confinement and close work were a little too much for a boy of fifteen or sixteen. My parents began to worry about my health. Especially they objected to the night work, which kept me till ten o'clock during our busy seasons.

Finally my father announced: "I am going down to speak to Mr. Boland about this." I wondered what would happen. The keynote of Mr. Boland's business philosophy was that success comes to the hard worker, and the weak fall by the wayside.

He was a tall, stout, energetic man who had worked his way to the top of a large business by force of will and dogged hard work, starting many years earlier as an office boy. He came from an old, well-to-do Maryland family, which after the Civil War and the freeing of its slaves was impoverished. Perhaps something of Southern bitter-

ness over the expropriation of wealth remained with him, steeling his nature to regain that position of means and influence to which he had been born. Frequently his actions were contradictory. Although he would not pay us suitably for overtime, he was generous with me personally; the last Christmas I was with him he gave me a check for fifty dollars.

When my father called to discuss with him the matter of my working late, Mr. Boland dwelt at length on his gospel of hard work and on his own rise from poverty to wealth against great odds. My father, who was an ardent believer in social reform and moreover loved an argument, cited Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* in return, arguing that success could not be worth while to any man if it was obtained at the expense of the health of half-grown boys. The interview closed on a rigid note that became a humorous byword in our family:

"Mr. Tettemer," said Mr. Boland portentously, "there is no sentiment in business."

"Mr. Boland," said my father, "if business is above human sentiment, then it must be of the Devil."

Thus in the heat of an argument on economics and social justice ended my first job, after due notice.

I found a similar position with the William A. Orr Shoe Company, of which my father was superintendent and part owner. Although in this establishment I was only a bill clerk, my work was easier and my wages leaped to ten dollars a week, on which, in those days, a boy could feel like a prince.

I maintained my two main pleasures during my working years, reading and games. On summer Saturday and Sunday afternoons I played baseball with my brothers and our friends in the vicinity. Some of our stricter neighbors frowned at our desecrating the Lord's day with base-

ball games, but they did not take into consideration the wise leniency of the Church on the enjoyment of Sunday as a day of relaxation, once the strict obligation of Mass is fulfilled.

On my fifteenth birthday my parents made me a present of a single-barreled twelve-gauge shotgun. I accumulated an assortment of impressive accouterments—a hunting coat with huge pockets for shells and game; powder and shot, with which I loaded my own shells in strict accordance with the rules in the book for the various types of game; duck decoys, calls, and countless small gadgets, which I enjoyed playing with, anyhow. I never shot anything to speak of. The majority of my shells were shot off at targets after a day of weary tramping in fruitless search of rabbits and quail; but I had all the paraphernalia it takes to be a first-class hunter.

My record as a fisherman was as indifferent. I often went fishing, and never caught a fish. Always there loomed over me the specter of someday doing so, when I would have to seize the creature and extract the hook, a prospect that may well have made me careless in casting my line.

Up to my sixteenth year I was neither what you would call a pious boy nor particularly interested in religion, notwithstanding our early games of church, and though I went to Mass on Sundays and to confession and communion once a month. But then I chanced to be laid up in bed for a few days with a cold, and my mother brought some religious books to my room for me to read. As I always approached anything to read from the standpoint of a story, *The Lives of the Saints*, by Alban Butler, interested me straight off, because these were stories. First those of the heroic early martyrs, then those of the missionaries, who went to far-off lands to carry the faith to

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the heathen, aroused in me a burning desire to do something with my own life that would have worth.

This wasn't a religious conversion in the accepted emotional meaning of the term; rather it was a turning of my mind for the first time to the possible meaning and usefulness of my life. Up to then I had been like any boy, merely taking for granted the fact of being alive, as a boy does, taking no thought of a reason for my existence, whether or how I would justify it. But now, in bed, surrounded in these books with stories of lives made useful and exciting in religious ways, I gave the question my gravest consideration with that stubborn thoroughness of which youth is capable.

From my faith I understood already that we are created by God to live a few short years on this earth in preparation for the eternal life of happiness with Him after death, which is the actual beginning of our real life. I reasoned that my real life was going to depend entirely on how I lived during this earthly or trial period. With the inexorable logic of my years I told myself that the sane and indeed the only thing for me was to spend every moment of my time henceforth in intensive preparation for that future, and unending, life.

At once my thinking became austere. How could one think of anything else? How could one spend one's time and energies on anything other than man's one true business in life, the service and love of God?

Now all my reading was confined to religious books, especially longer biographies of the saints. I soon traced how they had been animated by this very idea, dedicating their whole lives and energies to the "one thing necessary"—perfect service of God and His interests.

With the love of doing things thoroughly and well

that I inherited from my parents, and with a determined vision of utter futility in every interest and activity not leading in a straight line to God and eternity, all doubt as to my future departed from my mind. The monks appeared to me the only ones who comprehended the true purpose of existence. Setting themselves wholeheartedly to following Christ's admonition to the rich young man: "Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me," they renounced family, possessions, the world.

I felt in a hurry to "be about my Father's business." Instead of going to communion once a month, I began going every Sunday. On weekdays I raced through my lunch so I could spend half an hour in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, in the old Cathedral Church in the downtown business district.

Without disclosing my state to my family, I began to live in a whole new bright world in which everything had for me the meaning of pure truth. The joy and peace I felt were beyond description. Such enthusiasm possessed me that soon the games and the wide variety of reading that had enticed me lost their appeal and flavor. Nothing held my interest that did not bear directly on my new plan of life.

Essentially this conversion amounted to an intellectual realization of the meaning of life as contained in the Christian faith, augmented by the emotional consequences of such realization. The direction of my actions seemed altogether natural, really the only possible way for me.

II

For six months or so I kept my new-found intention to myself. Later I discovered that my mother had noticed a change in me; with that deep wisdom of hers she thought it best for me to choose my own time to reveal it.

Now I devoured spiritual books for the purpose of finding out everything I could about the monastic life and the characteristics of the various orders. I was not interested in becoming a secular priest; I wanted to become a lay brother. I pored over encyclopedias and many other books, which told me a great deal about the origin, history, purposes, rules, and modes of life in the principal monastic institutions. Gradually I decided that the Carthusian Order appealed to me most of all.

The order was founded in the eleventh century by St. Bruno. Its main characteristics, of great austerity, silence, and a purely contemplative life of prayer, were what drew me to it, because they seemed to rid life at one blow of all the extraneous things, the empty interests of this world, leaving one the opportunity of beginning without delay that life of the knowledge and love of God which, according to the Church, is man's main destiny, to be worked out through eternity, in heaven.

The combination in the Carthusian system of eremitic and cenobitic monastic forms—in other words, of the solitary and the community modes of living—appealed

to me. The Carthusian monk had his own little house and garden, where he worked and prayed in solitude; his scant meals were brought to his dwelling, to be slipped wordlessly through a panel in the door. The houses were clustered around three sides of a square or garden, the fourth side being occupied by the monastery church, and the whole constituting a tightly cloistered community. The famous Certosa of Pavia pictured for me a superlative example of Carthusian monastery and church.

The monks rarely met each other except to gather in the choir of the church to sing the Divine Office at the appointed hours. The nearest my imagination could come to a heaven on earth was the poetic picture of cowled monks emerging silently from their little houses, wending their grave way—at nighttime with lanterns—along the colonnaded cloister walk to the choir.

I learned with dismay that there was no monastery of the Carthusian Order in America. But it was a minor setback. I searched for some other order, resembling the Carthusians as nearly as possible in austerity and preoccupation with the contemplative life. Finally I chose the Congregation of the Passion, more commonly called the Passionist Order. It is one of the later orders in the Church, founded by St. Paul of the Cross a couple of hundred years ago.

I chose it for two particular reasons. I learned that it was the strictest and most contemplative of any of the modern orders which sprang up so numerously in the Church after the Counter-Reformation, and that it retained to a remarkable degree the monastic spirit and customs of the more ancient orders. Moreover, it maintained the original fervor of spirit of its founding, and strict observance of the rule.

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From my reading I deduced that, like other human institutions, the tendency of religious orders is to become lax in the course of time, as the original inspiration and example of the founder recedes into the past. My ardor was such that I was determined to join no order into which any spirit of the world had begun to creep. I could not bear the idea of half measures in service and love of God. My renunciation of the world would be complete, my dedication in the monastery to God absolute. The books I searched convinced me that the Passionists adhered strictly to this ideal. I would apply to them for admission to be a lay brother.

I could not do this without the permission of my parents, as I was now only seventeen years of age. Accordingly, one night after supper rather abruptly I said: "I am going to become a monk, a lay brother. Will you please give the superior at the monastery your permission?" In a way they were surprised, for I had kept my thoughts well to myself. Of the two, my mother was the less surprised having sensed that something was on my mind and knowing, as a good Catholic mother is sure to do, that it might have to do with thoughts of priesthood. Her own deep Irish faith bade her be joyful, but her mother's wisdom said: "Wait and see." She looked at me for a bit and then, giving me an affectionate pat, she smiled, saying comfortably: "Sure, boy, it will all wash off in the first rain, and then you'll be all for marrying some pretty colleen!"

Girls! She had observed, in the shrewd and private ways that were her own, that colleens were beginning to show interest in me, her great hulk of a son, with curly black hair and a frame six feet tall and brawny from athletic sports. But about girls my mind was made up. I had galumphed through the stage of worshipping them

from afar and, if one spoke to me, of making a fool of myself, turning into a wretched mass of blushes and confusion.

I was not lacking in proper Irish weakness for the pretty things and inwardly paid reverent homage to their beauty and charm; but in their presence I could only try clumsily to shrink my absurd bigness and keep my tongue from betraying me in gabble. In the daze of discovering the presence of females in the world I had, it is true, learned to pay attention to my apparel; ties, the cut of my clothes, demanded my attention, and the despised wave in my hair gave me hours of rage because no amount of wetting down would guarantee me that it would lie flat and presentable for long. But I did the best I could to deserve the notice bestowed on me by the creatures. Spending-money that had always gone for baseball mitts and shinny sticks went now for the gloves and ties of a dude and for sundry other adornments of the male figure. Of an evening I would praise God for my sister Nora, who graciously accepted me as male escort for herself and her school friends. Importantly I walked with them, silent and outwardly unmoved, but inwardly electrically conscious of these shatteringly fairylike creatures, who were busy, of course, pretending to be oblivious of my existence.

The one colleen who might have changed my determination to become a monk was resolutely intercepted by my mother in the dawn flush of a case that was never permitted to reach the stage of a first shy kiss. The girl was my age, small and round. I cannot remember her name, only that her mother had died and that she was taken into our home for shelter and comforting. The emotion of the circumstances wreathed her for me in a tremulous appeal.

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Shrewdly my mother got the idea that, at least so far as I was concerned, the girl was not so much a captive of her grief as she should be. It was a fact that the young lady had managed to find ways to make me conscious of her presence, one evening even calmly proposing that I take her out for a walk. It frightened my mother, who thought she had seen to it successfully that we never spoke two words alone.

But the guest was no match for Mother, who, in the very instant that I would have leaped at the promise of the walk, remarked suddenly with great calmness: "It would of course be lovely for you to have your walk—but unfortunately tonight John has to go with his father and brother to a meeting of the Knights of Father Matthew; they are going to present his application to be a member of the junior branch."

It jerked me back to the realization—most untimely—that before the young lady had dawned on me I had expressed a wish to join the organization. The Knights of Father Matthew was a society of Catholic men, founded by an Irish monk to fight what he called "the curse of Ireland"; in other words, the demon drink. The sole obligation of members was to sign a pledge for life not to drink intoxicating liquor. My father and my brother were members, and because joining things is an expression of normal youthful restlessness I though I would be too.

The walk being off, thanks to my mother's fierce protectiveness, I spent a very odd evening indeed. For two hours I sat alone in an outer room of the building where the meeting was held, waiting for the members to call me in to hear my application, and to sign my pledge. But in her fierce zeal to remove me from the side of the young lady my mother had evidently forgotten to explain to my father that he was to see that I was taken into the

Knights of Father Matthew, merely bidding him hastily: "Take John along with you when you go."

My father and my brother emerged from the meeting at last, and we walked home in silence. No reference whatever was made to my joining, and I felt defrauded and angry.

Mother was waiting up for us, but I stalked off to bed without a word. My bedroom was just above that of my parents. I could overhear their conjugal murmuring. Having, as I thought, been dealt with unfairly, I felt no shame for eavesdropping and applied my ear to the furnace outlet in the floor.

"What happened?" I heard my mother inquire eagerly. "John came in looking black as our old cat."

"Well, it wasn't very lively for him," said my father, "sitting outside there till the meeting finished."

"For the love of heaven, couldn't you see he was taken into the Knights? That's what I sent him for—I had to get him out of this house, away from this plaguey girl—once let a girl such as she get hold of a man and all he'll need then is a rope to hang himself with!" cried my mother. "Sure you could have found the occasion to get him into the Knights!"

As I crept into bed I had grace enough to feel a little mean about the eavesdropping, but belligerent just the same. The mind is an accommodating instrument, easily finding reasons for having its own way. So I justified my action, quieting my conscience.

Next evening when I came home from work the colleen was gone. The incident marked the only time I ever caught my mother using her wonderful Irish guile, though that is not to say it was the only time she so used it. And anyhow I was not seriously seeking anything to change my mind about entering the monastery.

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Discovering that I was waiting for parental permission, my father was torn between the spontaneous satisfaction of the Catholic convert and disappointment over the loss in the worldly sense of a son. I was his favorite. He had counted on my continuing his business and having me by him to carry on as he grew old.

"I won't stand in your way, boy, if that's what you want," he said; "but wait a year. You know, you have to be sure it's no passing whim." His voice was filled with yearning, but a certain sternness too as he added: "And you don't want to go being a lay brother. That's no way to do. Be a monk all the way or don't go near the monastery; that's my thought on the subject."

I didn't debate it with him, hoping that when the time came his objection would overcome itself. "All right, Pa, I'll wait a year," I said. I loved him, and his condition seemed to me reasonable; and I wanted him to feel right about it when it came time to do what I had to do.

Some time earlier we had moved from the old home on Dayton Street out into the country, at Jennings Heights. My father had bought and remodeled the old Garesché homestead there; we had the air and beauty of the country, yet my father and I could go into the city daily to work, on the Wabash Railroad, which passed about three quarters of a mile from our house.

My sister Nora and I had the habit of going for long walks on the hills, picking wildflowers in the woods and discussing our hopes and plans for the future. Occasionally we drove or rode horseback, but Nora was frail and could not stand any strenuous exercise.

I could understand the spiritual relationship between St. Francis and St. Claire of Assisi, in which the boundless giving without thought of return was pure love, played back and forth between a man and a woman who

were both saints. I felt sure they could not distinguish between their love for God and their love for each other, and very likely there was indeed no distinction. That such love can flower in the human heart is the hope and promise of the race, for it can cause that ultimate divider, hunger of self, to dissolve into the love of God, the Uniter.

I learned from my mother that for some time Nora had wanted to join the strictly enclosed convent of the Carmelite Order. My father refused his permission until she was at least twenty-five because her health was frail and he could not consent unless or until it became robust. She was two years my senior, and we now became very close through discovering our bond of fervent desire to devote our lives exclusively to God. It surprised Nora to find that I knew so much about the religious life and the various orders, but I explained that I had read about practically nothing else for the last six or eight months. The interlude of our comradeship became among the most beautiful of my life. But, alas, it was destined, in the earthly sense, to be short. In the winter Nora contracted a bad cold, which quickly turned into pneumonia. In a few weeks, not yet twenty years old, she was gone.

My other sister, Mary, had died a few years before, but I had been too young and unaware then to suffer much or to realize what it meant to my mother. It seemed now that this loss of her second daughter would surely break her heart. I think she could easily have gone out of her mind or lain down and died but for her religion. In a way her sad resignation to God's will had an effect on the course of my own life.

The knowledge that the loss of Nora concealed some inscrutable divine reason prevented her grief from ending in black despair, but after the funeral she called me

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to her side. "John, boy," she said, heavily, "we won't keep you from your heart's desire any longer. There is nothing to live for in this world, nothing to give any lasting happiness. Perhaps we should have let Nora go into the convent—she's gone from us now anyway. I know now that you're right, handing over your life to God. We'll be content to let you ask for admission to the monastery right away."

"I'll be happy there, Mother," I said, wanting for words that would make the burden easier for her soul to bear. Her soul was very close to mine; hers the spirit of a saint, and I was as close to it as I could ever expect to draw to a saint. I held her in my arms.

"Yes," she said, sadness and hope meeting in the shimmer of her tears, "you will be happy there."

III

I made my application to Father Peter, rector of the Passionist monastery at Normandy, Missouri, to be accepted as a postulant in that order. At home it was a time of anxious waiting and hours spent in prayer at the Cathedral Church for me, and for the rest of the family a certain subdued thoughtfulness. No matter how proud and happy a family may be when one of its members prepares to withdraw from the world, a tincture of sadness is inevitable, in the breaking of human ties. Our family was happily close and the prospect was bound to cause a wrench to our affections.

The waiting was difficult for me, well as I knew that the outcome was in God's hand and would reflect His love.

Investigations must be made of the soundness of body and mind, both of the prospective postulant and of his family. Any trace of hereditary disease or insanity is an automatic bar. After all the preliminaries were done, the superior of the provincial must be consulted, for his formal approval is necessary. It seemed a blessed sign to me that one day in Our Lady's month, May, word came that I was accepted. I was instructed to come to live in the monastery at Normandy until a place should open for me in the preparatory college.

For four or five months in this monastery of Our Lady of Good Counsel I was a layman, studying, especially

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Latin and English, under Father Valentine, and doing odd jobs like sweeping the corridors, looking after the guest rooms, answering the doorbell, and feeding the stream of tramps, who always know they can be sure of a meal from the monks. One incident will show that I had much to learn.

As I watered the many flowerbeds in the garden in front of the monastery one evening, the monks came out after their evening meal for their recreation under the pine trees. Father Peter came over to me and inquired if I could turn handsprings.

"Oh yes, Father," I cried, delighted at a chance to display my athletic prowess. I went through a whole series of gymnastic contortions and felt extremely vain.

Father Peter smiled slightly and rejoined the monks. Something in their expressions made me wonder if I had gone too far.

Many years afterward Father Peter told me that the performance had made a great impression on him. Then he explained its significance to me. During that evening at supper they had been reading in the refectory about the tests to which the early monks were accustomed to put young men aspiring to enter the order. These young men were commanded to do all sorts of absurd, even embarrassing things, to test their simple and blind obedience and humility. Sometimes they were told to plant cabbages upside down, or to wear ridiculous clothes. And one favorite method was to make serious and dignified young men turn somersaults in the presence of the community. The reading had given Father Peter the idea of trying the test on me. He confided to me that the monks had been astounded that I did not wait for some sort of command, but embarked instantly on my impressive display.

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Actually the test had failed with me, for instead of attesting a virtue of humility it only inflamed my vanity to show off all the athletic tricks I knew. I suppose I did measure up in obedience.

In those early days at the monastery my mother received a surprising report that her son had hired out to some third-rate farmer and was seen driving a wind-broken horse and a rickety wagon about the countryside. "Faith," cried my mother, laughing heartily, "I know the farmer the boy's working for. It's the Poor Man of Nazareth—maybe you've heard of him?"

September came and I was sent to the preparatory college at Dunkirk, in New York State, where young men seeking entrance to the order completed their preliminary studies and were further tested in the many qualifications for the monk's life. This was really a coaching school, where students with different degrees and kinds of previous education were brought up to a certain uniform and fairly high standard.

A Father Dominic was in charge of us. He was a very well-educated, youngish man, who seemed to possess a special knack for teaching the substance of a subject without going through all the tedious routine. Soon we were not only reading Virgil and Horace, but enjoying them, to say nothing of writing poetry in Latin ourselves, all within a year's time, although some of us, like myself, had only had a year or two of that language. Of course it must be remembered that a year's study in the monastery is equivalent to nearly two years in secular colleges, because all through our student days we studied eleven months of the year and devoted practically all our time and energies to learning. Otherwise I could never have got through the enormous mental tasks required even during the long years from my Dunkirk days until the

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end of my student days in Rome, ten years later. I enjoyed the work under Father Dominic so much that I added extra studies to my regular classes.

We had plenty of exercise, nevertheless—baseball in summer, football in winter. We had months of skating on Lake Erie. Our baseball team was sometimes pitted against local nines, and we always managed to give a good account of ourselves. I, as pitcher, and my catcher, a country boy named James, achieved a degree of transient fame as “the sons of thunder.”

No great effort was made to turn us into saints overnight. In fact, I think we were encouraged to be ourselves in order that our fundamental characters would disclose themselves. Father Dominic would stand quietly by, observing us as we played or argued, but never seeming in any hurry to settle our disputes.

The one incident that momentarily marred the happiness of this year in Dunkirk was an absurd exhibition of my old shyness. We were gathered in the common room, and Father Dominic was selecting the best singers to form a choir for the church. He drifted from one to another, inviting them to sing snatches of such songs as they knew, so he could judge their pitch and ear for music.

When it came my turn I announced anxiously that I did not know any songs. Singing in public had always been painful to me, and I had great sympathy for my listeners as well. I felt that I would welcome martyrdom in preference to singing before that crowd of my school-fellows. It did not seem possible to Father Dominic that I knew no words of any song and could not sing in any case. Though a kindly man, he felt impelled to make an issue of it, standing firm on his insistence that every boy knows some song and that whether I thought I could sing or not, I must make the attempt.

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It was a tense moment for me, standing there suffering the torments, but, for all that, as obstinate as any Dutchman. The priest sat silently but with determined jaw, refusing to go on until I had taken my turn. I felt that my whole future might depend on this test. Yet I simply couldn't bring myself to utter a sound.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a traitorous wretch who called out that he himself had heard me sing "Down went McGinty to the bottom of the sea"!

I was beaten. Sinking deeper into confusion and shame than ever poor McGinty sank into the sea, I opened my mouth and croaked forth something that passed for a song. The sympathies of my companions were clearly with me, for they applauded noisily.

"Well, John," said Father Dominic, smiling absently, "I don't believe we'll need you in the choir."

Evidently this period of study was a first weeding-out of undesirables, for boys were constantly being returned to their homes, new ones coming to take their places. The final sifting out would take place during the novitiate, when the formal spiritual training would begin in earnest. Then the great decision, vital to us and to the order, would be made, of who should be finally accepted to make his religious vows and who should at the last moment be turned back. Now we regarded wistfully those fortunate ones who from time to time were instructed to pack their things and go to Pittsburgh, where the novitiate was situated.

At last, after twelve months of intensive study at Dunkirk, my happy day came. With four of my companions I was instructed to proceed to the novitiate, to begin the last year of trial and preparation, upon which my future depended. I was fearful of the ordeal and its outcome, yet I had a feeling of purest joy at the thought of em-

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barking on this last stage of my preparatory journey to reach my soul's desire, the giving of myself, body and soul, to God and His service.

Again I explained to Father Dominic my desire to become a lay brother rather than a priest.

"Explain your inclinations to your superiors at Pittsburgh, my boy," he said. "They will decide what is best for you."

IV

The canon law of the Church requires that aspirants to the monastic life pass at least one full year of trial and probation, during which they must in all respects lead the life according to the rule of the order of which they hope to become members. Thus, with the exception that they are not bound by the three monastic vows, they have a long and full trial of the mode of life, with its austerities, its seclusion, its hours of prayer and study, or other activities according to the special genius of the order, which they will be obligated to lead for the remainder of their lives. This is the novitiate. Likewise the monastery set aside for this purpose of trying out and training the candidates for membership in the order is called the novitiate. Aspirants are called novices.

Among the Passionists the novitiate is usually a wing or portion of the monastery proper, but enclosed by barriers in such a manner that the professed monks—that is, those who have made their profession and taken their vows—may not enter, nor the novices themselves leave without the express permission of the superior of the monastery.

This superior has the title “Master of Novices” and is chosen from the experienced older members. Naturally his is an office of great responsibility and importance, for on him depend in great measure the quality, enthusiasm, and religious fervor of future members of the order,

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hence the quality and vigor of the order itself. For this reason he must be a man versed in the theory and practice of the spiritual life, adept in mental prayer and contemplation—its degrees, obstacles, methods, ends—as the life of prayer is to be the source of strength, inspiration, and perseverance to the monk throughout a life that offers but little to the ordinary cravings of human nature.

The master of novices, besides being a man of holiness, with the ability to teach the fundamentals of prayer and virtue, must also have a profound knowledge of human nature, to be able to distinguish between basic faults of character that would render a novice, however eager and fervent at the moment, unfit for the lifelong ordeal of monasticism, and the more superficial failings and weaknesses that human nature is subject to, especially in youth, but which, with a good will and proper training, he can overcome.

Arriving at the novitiate from the preparatory college, my four companions and I were welcomed with great kindness and made to feel that our new home would be a pleasant one. We were assigned to our cells and, intangibly, made to feel comfortable. Each novice had his cell to himself: a small, scantily furnished room with a plain wooden table, two simple chairs, and a bed made by three boards supported on two low wooden horses. Little less hard than the boards on which it is placed is the straw sack, tightly packed. A pillow of the same undentable quality is a headrest.

Father George was our Master of Novices, a man who resembled a very tall, thin bird. His hair was gray and his mien exceptionally stern. Yet there was an indefinable air about him that gave us a feeling of confidence. We sensed that he would be there to restore us if our spirits should falter.

It was perhaps no accident that Father George's assistant, the Vice-Master Father Stanislaus, was an altogether different personality. Perhaps twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, this short, compact Irishman flew around with energy and a lively and cheerful concern for his charges. "Hurry up, now!" he would urge us briskly as we went out for our appointed walks in the grounds or the occasional longer tramps into the country; "don't be expecting God to hang about while you catch up to Him with your slow feet!"

Father Stanislaus was an all-round practical monk, looking after our studies like a hawk, but also with rugged efficiency after our part in the menial work—sweeping the corridors, cleaning the public rooms, keeping in order the choir, chapels, and library; overseeing, too, the more expert work of those delegated to cultivate the gardens that yielded the flowers for the altar. Sprinting around the gardens, he would pause suddenly to nip off a chrysanthemum or a lily, holding it up to study, rallying the novices busy with trowel and plant food, crying: "Well, Confrater so-and-so, doesn't it bring joy into your soul to be a partner to Him who fashioned a thing of such beauty?" His spirit rejoiced without ceasing and his enthusiasm was a contagion, easing us over many places in the road that were rocky to our anxious young feet. Being jolly, full of common sense and friendliness, he was much more easily approachable than Father George. But Father Stanislaus had his serious side too. Later on, in my student days, he was to become my spiritual director and adviser, leading me along the initial steps to mystical prayer, as distinguished from the preliminary degree of mental prayer, called meditation.

The warm welcome of the novitiate superiors was followed by a joyous reception from the novices who had

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arrived ahead of us. We knew many of them from the preparatory college. They were perhaps a little more subdued than when we had seen them last, a little less exuberant than they had been in the freer atmosphere of study and play at Dunkirk; the quality of depth and warmth in their affectionate greetings bespoke greater maturity now, a poise we had not anticipated in the college friends of a few short months ago.

We remained in the intermediate state called postulantship for a few weeks. Although partaking of the same routine as the others, we continued to wear secular clothes, and the transition to the secluded life was protected by not leaving us much to ourselves. In her wisdom the Church understands how to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Her purpose is to make good, happy, useful monks who, with time and training and God's grace, will follow in the footsteps of the saints. But, as her method with us showed, she does not expect heroic virtue overnight.

Each day I became a little better acquainted with the twofold purpose of the novitiate. I was receiving the opportunity to try out under practical conditions and over a longer period the mode of life I was determined to embrace. I was testing my physical and moral stamina to sustain me in the difficult life of my choice. Daily experience could furnish me with the answers to the many and inevitable questions crowding into a postulant's mind.

Did my desire to embrace monasticism proceed from the deep-rooted urge to devote my life to God and to the service of humanity, or was it rather, perhaps, motivated by a youthful and fleeting admiration for some monk I had seen, who had perhaps preached in the church of my parish, or for some imaginative picture

formed in my mind through reading about the lives of great monks of the past? Did I perhaps see myself as a monk preaching in a parish pulpit in years to come, listened to by thousands, acclaimed for holiness and oratorical power? Was I mistaking ambition for fame for a vocation to the religious life? Would the initial taste of monastic discipline be enough to show me that I had made a mistake?

I could, I knew, return home from the novitiate if it proved to make too great demands for sacrifice of my individuality and, if I were still of the religious turn of mind, seek entrance to a seminary and become a secular priest, where more concessions are made to human nature and where my withdrawal from the world of human association would not be so complete.

The nature of such questions will indicate why the master and vice-master of novices in particular must be men of great discernment, able to distinguish between the total breakdown of one's ideal and the will to pursue it, and a discouragement that is the passing result of new surroundings and a wholly new mode of life.

There are very few novices who do not at one time or another suffer sharp attacks of loneliness, homesickness, doubts of vocation. Yet these are but the shadows in the picture, and serve to bring out the joys of service and sacrifice, the peace of soul, the special favors one feels he receives from God in prayer in times of fervor, the contentment which comes from feeling that one is dedicating oneself to the highest and best.

The second, and to the monastery paramount, purpose of the novitiate is to give the order the occasion to test those who seek admission; to reject those who do not possess the necessary qualifications and dispositions; to

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train the promising ones in the foundations of the spiritual life, in the knowledge of the rule, and in the nature and method of prayer.

The testing is kind, but thorough. Through centuries of experience the Church has acquired, and handed on by tradition, a deep knowledge of human nature. She requires that the candidates for the monastic life be free of any hereditary taint. *Mens sana in corpore sano.* While she demands a fair aptitude for study, she does not require phenomenal brilliance. It is on the moral qualities that go to make up character that she lays the greatest stress. In her view the ideal novice is healthy, cheerful, not given to any great introspection, not easily depressed or discouraged. Her experience has been that the happy, play-loving boy makes the best monk, while the melancholy, the sad, the nervous temperament is likely to break down under the ordeal of the strict discipline and solitude of the monastery. Many applicants are never accepted; others are weeded out for one reason or another. If one gets as far as the novitiate, he has a fair chance of becoming a monk. Still, with the stricter life and more strenuous testing of the year of probation, perhaps the average of those sifted out would be twenty-five or thirty per cent.

The mechanism for this sifting process is rather Masonic. The professed monks of the monastery in which the novitiate is located are brought together periodically in a meeting called the chapter; here they discuss the conduct, character, and merits of the novices, and vote by secret ballot on the vital question whether the novice should be allowed to continue his probation or should be sent home. Four regular chapters are held at three-month intervals during the probationary period of each

novice, and other special ones may be convened should any urgent question arise as to the conduct, health, or character of a novice.

After a few weeks in this postulantship we were informed by the Master in choir one morning after our prayer that we had passed our first chapter successfully and would receive the habit on the following Sunday.

Imagine our joy, for the year of probation actually begins when we are clothed in the monk's habit! Toward that day my heart had turned for nearly two years—a day when I should put on the livery of Christ and begin that life of self-consecration to God which burned brightly in my soul as the highest ideal of a human being. A day second only to that greatest of all days in a monk's life when, at the successful end of his novitiate, he completes his renunciation of the world by the solemn profession of the three religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and begins—a new man in a new world—a life devoted to the interests of God and of humanity.

Religion has not created this urge toward the greater, nobler life; it comes rather from the depths of man's own nature. But religion has furnished a channel, a framework, by which this idealism can become operative for the welfare of humanity. What great works of unselfish devotion to the needs of others—the sick, the lepers, the blind, the foundling, the old and decrepit, the poor, the ignorant, all classes of the weak, the deficient, the outcast—have been the fruit of this youthful idealism, directed and channeled by the institutions of religion!

At the beginning of the novitiate the novice is given a new name, further emphasizing his separation from his old life and his entering upon an entirely new one. On

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this morning when Father Master announced that we five postulants were to be clothed with the Passionist habit, he also said that he had selected five names for us, writing them on separate pieces of paper, which we were to draw by lots. On the way from the choir to the chapter room, where the drawing was to take place, I prayed earnestly to Our Lady that I should draw the name of the saint who in his life had been most devoted to Her.

As we filed into the chapter room and arranged ourselves around the long table down the center, Father George placed the five bits of folded paper in his biretta. Then, after a short prayer on our knees, each of us went to the head of the table and drew his name.

The names turned out to be Walter, Ethelbert, Pancratius, Ildephonsus, and Eustace. Not much to choose from as far as euphony was concerned, with the possible exception of the first. But from my point of view there was only one that was desirable, Ildefonso. St. Ildefonso, or Ildephonsus, had been Archbishop of Toledo in Spain in the ninth century. He was the patron saint of the Alfonsos, kings of Spain. He was noted especially for his exceptional devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and had written several works in her honor and in defense of her prerogatives. None of the other four saints whose names were in the biretta was characterized, as far as is known, by this love for Our Lady.

When my turn came I was next to the last in order of precedence. I fell on my knees before the Master of Novices and, with a last fervent prayer, drew the last but one of the remaining slips of paper. I opened it with trembling fingers and—

My joy was full and running over when I found written upon it the name Ildephonsus. My Mother in Heaven

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had given me my name as a direct answer to prayer. Mathematicians might speak of odds, but to me there was no doubt that Our Lady had christened me with the name of one of her special servants.

The ceremony of clothing us with the habit of the order was simple, but touching and beautiful. The altar was decked out as for a great festival, with the most beautiful flowers the garden afforded and myriad lights. The whole community was present in the sanctuary, and the body of the church was filled with those faithful for whom the service of the dedication of a young life to God never seems to lose its emotional appeal.

As postulants we five lay on our faces on the floor of the sanctuary, prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament while the celebrant—on this occasion Father George—and his assistants at the altar, robed in rich vestments, chanted the prayers and litanies, calling upon God and His saints to bless us in the solemn renunciation of the world which we were about to make, and to strengthen us to remain faithful to His service to the end.

Then, one by one, we knelt before the Master of Novices, and the clothing began. Our upper outer garments were removed, and the hair cut from our heads in the form of a cross, to symbolize the putting away of the materials and vanities of this world. With appropriate words the long, heavy, black woolen habit was slipped over our heads, and we were helped to adjust it to ourselves. The leathern girdle having been fastened about our waists, a mantle of the woolen material, reaching to the knees, was thrown over our shoulders. On our heads a crown of thorns was placed, and a large wooden cross was laid upon our right shoulder, with accompanying formulas which admonished us that we were taking upon

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ourselves the livery of Christ crucified and pledging ourselves to follow His example.

From the point of view of the assembled congregation, perhaps it appears a sad rite despite the festive pomp and decoration of the sanctuary. This renunciation of all that the world holds as worth while in life must remind some of a burial service. The words of the ritual might strengthen this impression: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." For me, however, it was one of the happiest moments of my life. My dreams had at last come true, and tears of happiness and gratitude coursed down my face. The joy and peace that came into my soul on that day remained with me during the whole year of my novitiate, making what might seem to the outside world a hard and unbearable life a veritable paradise.

The ceremony closed with a solemn procession of the monks through the aisles of the church, chanting the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving. We fledglings, still wearing our crowns of thorns and bearing our heavy wooden crosses, followed at the end of the procession. As our eyes were fittingly downcast, I did not see what I was to witness later many times: that in the large congregation there was hardly a dry eye, as young men on the very threshold of life passed by, bearing their symbols of the Passion of Christ, literally obeying the words of their Master: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it."

After the church ceremony, in the sacristy we were embraced with affection by all the monks, priests and lay brothers, welcoming us into the permanent ranks of the community. In equal happiness the novices joy-

fully congratulated each other. The scene was an illustration of the fact that when it is animated by love, human nature is a beautiful thing indeed.

The moment came for putting off the last vestige of secular clothing and completing the full monastic dress.

“These sandals would be better for Confrater so-and-so!” someone cried out somewhere, with laughter, and there was a flurry of humorous comment on what, among ourselves, we referred to as our “regimentals”: the loose, canvas-like drawers, reaching to a little below the knee, and threaded through with a cord drawing them together like a great bag around the waist. “Help! Someone come and find me!” another voice cried in highly secular tones, which issued from the voluminous folds of a heavy woolen, loose-fitting shirt being put on over his head, to fall over the drawers nearly to the knees.

For some reason, those in charge of monastic garb seemed to believe that young monks came in only two sizes or so, and outfits were made accordingly. They were handed out by the brother in charge of “the linen” at proper intervals, and it was always a gamble whether the somewhat heathenish-looking outfit would have any affinity whatever with the physical measurements of the individual. The grotesque misfits that often resulted were perhaps useful in two ways: they afforded moments of rollicking amusement, which were healthy; and they emphasized the unimportance of material adornment. When our garments were new they were so stiff that they could practically be made to stand in a corner by themselves. From the standpoint of health I dare say there was certain beneficial value in their very voluminosity. From that of comfort or æsthetics they were purely and simply impossible.

I remember one young monk who had his troubles.

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Being only five feet tall, he had to take measures. We always called him Little Benjamin, and could not always keep our faces straight when he sped through the corridors with his regiments rolled up at wrist and ankle. "Do you want to see me fall down for the glory of God?" he would grumble when we snickered; he meant no offense to God, and the possibility was very real. Once he pleaded with the brother in charge of the linen to find an outfit a little more to his size, but nothing came of it; perhaps it was the brother's way of recalling to his mind the warning: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

As soon as we had donned the full monastic dress we were to return to the community room to pass the rest of the afternoon in the simple but joyous festivities befitting the step forward in our lives represented by the solemn ceremonies in the church. The final touch to our clothing was a large blue bandana, about twenty inches square, which we rolled up and carried in the wide sleeves of the habit for a handkerchief. The size, I fancy, derived from the snuff-taking habits that were traditional among monks in Italy; it was the only worldly practice permitted, and was justified on the ground that snuff helped one to keep awake during the long hours in choir.

As young monks we soon found that it required real skill to walk in our habits, as the many heavy folds were forever getting in the way. I inherited from my father a habit of sudden and vigorous movement. Father George frowned, and Father Stanislaus pointed out to me at length that a slow and dignified walk is becoming to a monk. But it continued to be the easiest thing in the world for me to trip over my habit, and I never really achieved the graceful art of genuflecting and kneeling without making a great snarl of my heavy woolen robe.

We wore our robes night and day. They were too hot

in summer and too cold in winter. The comfort of pajamas was unknown to the monastery, and on retiring we took off only our sandals and belts, rolling onto our beds with a mighty swing, hoping to avoid serious entanglement in the yards of our habits. By this minimum of undressing we were ready at the signal for Matins and able to rise quickly in the middle of the night and get to the choir in the allotted five minutes.

Unhygienic, you say? Perhaps, although it cannot be denied that monks often live to a ripe old age. Of course, the founders of religious orders, in writing the rules, were more concerned with simplicity and asceticism than with health. It is true that they developed a certain ingenuity in finding ways of making life uncomfortable for human nature; nevertheless, though far from luxurious, on the whole the monastic life was healthful for us. Its regularity, the coarse but substantial food, the avoidance of excess, the absence of worry, the mind at peace, the contentment of spirit—all these make for hardy health and freedom from disease of either body or mind. The normally cheerful outlook of the monk, his happy satisfaction with the bare necessities, the absence of all frustrations are perhaps as excellent prophylactics as can be found in any department of existence. Therefore I loved my habit. It was the badge of my vocation, the symbol of all my incentive and aspiration.

"Hurry back to the others now," Father Stanislaus called out, bustling about to make sure we had completed our full monastic regalia in seemly fashion. "There's lemonade and cookies for you this happy day, and a walk around the garden. You can be speaking all around too. Come along, now; be off with you."

"Speaking all around" was the term applied to an interval of being permitted to talk with any and all the

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novices instead of only the one regularly assigned by the Master as our companion during the regular hours of recreation and walking. Mostly, companions were compatible. If for any reason they were not, we had the relief of knowing that companions were changed every few weeks in order to give us opportunity to become acquainted with everyone. There were definite limits to the activity of companionship, however; unrestrained conversation was not ordinarily permitted, and so the occasion of "speaking all around" was a real treat.

My first day as a Passionist novice, a day of unalloyed happiness, came to an end. It was a hint of a long future filled with such days of joyous peace and cloudless happiness, in which I would never be bored because of limitless adventures opening before me for study and prayer.

We studied very hard, especially in the sciences and philosophy. By human knowledge we sought to solve the great riddle of existence, surely an absorbing goal for anyone who enjoys the life of the intellect. We prayed diligently and often, through prayer embarking on that adventure which, in some form or other, engages the energies and ambitions of everyone who is keenly alive: the attainment of happiness through the fulfillment of his inmost nature.

After we had enthusiastically finished all the lemonade and cookies, after we had savored the festive privilege of "speaking all around," after we had chanted and prayed in the choir, we retired. Clumsily I composed myself for sleep on my hard bed amid the unruly folds of my habit. My soul was filled with contentment and a great peace.

V

My typical days as a novice were in miniature a fair representation of the routine I would follow as a monk of the order.

After the four or five hours' sleep, which seemed more like five minutes because of the events and the emotion of receiving my new name and habit on the previous day, after midnight we were aroused by the loud sounding of the "rattle," an oblong piece of hardwood, about a foot in length and with a wooden flapper on each side, well calculated to wake all but the dead for the chanting of Matins and Lauds. A mighty clatter and din are produced as a novice hastens along the monastery corridors agitating the rattle by grasping it firmly through the cut in one end.

It was the custom in the early Church to hold public worship and sing praises to God many times through the day and night. These services were called the Divine Office, or canonical hours, each named according to the time at which it was sung. Matins came at midnight, and Lauds at break of day, with Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None at the first, third, sixth, and ninth hour of the artificial Roman day; that is, at six, nine, twelve, and three o'clock. Vespers, still held as a public service, was sung at six o'clock, and Compline, the last prayer at the close of the day, at nine o'clock. The offices are composed chiefly of the singing of the psalms of David, interspersed

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with readings from New and Old Testaments, with excerpts from the early fathers. They varied according to the seasons and feasts of the Church year. The Catholic priest is obligated to recite the whole office, or "read his breviary," every day; to do so in a prayerful spirit requires at least a good hour.

The Passionists, one of the few present-day orders in the Church to do so, retain the old monastic custom of singing or chanting the office solemnly in choir at the stipulated periods of the day and night, in accordance with early tradition. This takes about three hours every day. If we add to this the hour of mental prayer morning and evening, and the half hour given to celebrating Mass, it will be seen that the monk engages in direct spiritual exercises for practically one quarter of the twenty-four hours.

At the first clamor of the rattle I put on my sandals and girdle and stumbled half-asleep to the choir, that large chapel at one end of which is the altar, and around the other three sides of which are the stalls and lecterns where the monks sit, kneel, and stand during the singing of the office. They stand during the chanting of the psalms and hymns, and sit while one of the monks reads aloud the extracts from the Scriptures and the early fathers. The singing is antiphonal; that is to say, one verse is sung by one side of the choir, the next in turn by the other side. Except at the major festivals when the beautiful psalm tones of the Gregorian chant are used, the chanting is in singing monotone.

The choral service is designed as a pæan of praise and thanksgiving, perpetually rising from earth to heaven. We could feel ourselves literally joining with the choirs of angels around the throne of God; especially at Matins, when the rest of the world was sleeping, we found unique

joy and fervor in thus raising our hearts and voices, in the name of all men, to Him who was conceived as the Creator and Father of all. The Christian conception of God, man, and the universe is judged by some to be naïve and childlike; but surely in the light of its faith nothing could be more beautiful and appropriate than the monk's song of praise and adoration.

Let me confess that joyous fervor was not always the first emotion of the novice, standing for nearly an hour and a half at this midnight chanting of Matins and Lauds.

"Oh-hhh-hhh—" ran a more or less collective groan at the unearthly racket of the rattle. Brought up rudely from the abyss of sleep, often we found it difficult if not impossible even to get our eyes open, and it was by no means an uncommon sight to see confratres nodding and swaying insensibly—out on their knees, so to speak. More than once, sitting in stiff semiconsciousness for the reading of the lessons, the breviary slipped from my hands, falling with a crash to the floor, to my belated shame.

In time, habit enabled us as a general thing to remain awake; but it takes long years indeed to become really accustomed to the rigor of breaking sleep in the depths of the night. Of all the methods of making life strenuous for the monk, this never quite loses its sting of austerity and takes the longest to make second nature.

I remember two or three occasions when we had gone on a daylong outing. The superior dispensed us from having to rise for Matins, a windfall indeed! The boon of a night's unbroken rest, bestowed on an individual monk or in rare instances on the whole community is looked on, especially by young monks, as the greatest favor that can be bestowed by a superior.

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Three nights a week the lights were put out after the singing of the office, the shutters were closed, and the monks scourged themselves for about ten minutes, while the long psalm of the *Miserere* and other prayers were recited. A few of the monastic orders that are modeled on the ascetic traditions of the early monks still retain this medieval penitential practice. The “discipline” or scourge is generally made of knotted cords and can be laid on lightly or heavily as fervor dictates.

Every once in a while there would be telltale splashes of blood, testifying to a fanatical degree of fervor. Father Stanislaus’s customary briskness and energetic cheerfulness would give way to kind and wise admonition that along with fervor novices should consider restraint and moderation as virtues.

The singing of Matins and Lauds took about an hour and a quarter, leaving fifteen minutes of the prescribed hour and a half for mental prayer. By that time we were more or less awake, but nevertheless stumbled back gratefully to our beds for the two or three hours more of permissible sleep.

At five thirty or six o’clock, depending on the season of the year, the rattle tore us awake again, and we hurried to the choir to sing the office of Prime and Tierce, which occupies half an hour. Then came the hour to be spent in mental prayer, after which priests and students went to the refectory for breakfast, consisting of one cup of coffee and a bit of bread, eaten standing. The original rule did not permit the fast to be broken till noon, and this breakfast, meager as it was, conceded to a frailty of human nature in modern times.

With breakfast done, the priests and students dispersed to their cells to study, and lay brothers went about their duties in keeping up the cleanliness and order of

the monastery building. The novices, first spending another hour in prayer, went to the chapter room with the Master, to receive instruction for a half hour or more in the theory and method of mental prayer. As the practice of meditation and contemplation is considered the foundation of the spiritual life and the primary means by which the monk develops the Christian virtues and acquires the strength of soul needed to persevere in his chosen life, great stress is concentrated on this basic aspect of spiritual living.

The Catholic definition of prayer may be expressed as the raising of the mind and heart to God. The raising of the mind to God is in the nature of a means, and therefore is the first stage of mental prayer, which is meditation. The raising of the heart, the emotions, and the will to God is the end of prayer, which finds its full purpose in the final attainment of union of the soul with God. The many degrees between these two stages of prayer mark the progress of the individual monk upon the road he has elected to travel. The external practice of virtue is not neglected; it is rather dependent on and created by the interior attitude toward life, produced in the soul by prayer.

The novice is drilled, almost by rote, in the routine of meditation. He is given a formula, as it were, which he must follow faithfully until he acquires skill and ease in the difficult task of controlling his mind and keeping it concentrated on the subject appointed for his meditation. Before the hour of prayer he must choose a subject, read about it, and divide it into parts (generally three) so that he will be sure of having an abundance of acceptable matter for consideration and not be left merely to his own devices or inspirations, which, in the early days

of novitiate, would be tantamount to vague and vain wanderings of his imagination.

An example may help the reader to understand this first important step on the long road of mental prayer. The novice chooses some episode, from the life of Christ, say, and as a preliminary fixes the picture of the scene in his imagination as a precaution against wandering, which is an ever present danger for the young beginner. This choice of episode is called the "composition of place."

On one occasion the subject I chose was that of the crowning with thorns, and I prepared three points for consideration: the physical sufferings, the insults, and the attitude of Jesus throughout the ordeal. After placing the scene before my imagination as vividly as I was able, I proceeded to consider the pain caused by the thorns, the blows, and other details. Naturally this aroused in me emotions of sympathy, compassion, hatred, and sorrow for sin as the cause of Jesus' suffering. This arousing of the emotions was the goal of my meditation, but here the rules and formality ended. The novice is taught to allow his heart full play for as long as it is stirred, and not to pass on to further thought about his subject until one set of emotions dies down, because the use of the mind is only the means to the end of loving intercourse between the soul and God. If this emotional state continues until the end of the hour allotted for prayer, so much the better. If not, the novice should move on after the same manner to his next subject.

As young aspirants to sanctity we were cautioned, however, that the fruit of prayer is holiness of life and that therefore during our meditation, and especially at its close, we must make definite and practical resolutions, which we would strive to carry out in the course of the

day. These generally concerned besetting weaknesses, or, as it is called in the books on asceticism, "predominant passion," to the discovery and conquering of which much time is given both during the novitiate and in ensuing years. In weekly conferences with the Master, and later with our spiritual directors, we were helped to examine our actions and motives critically, in order to bring to light the mainspring of our faults, whether it be pride, sloth, ambition, vanity, or what not; and we were influenced and encouraged to take up a lifelong battle to overcome them.

In the chapter room after the morning prayer the Master explained the nature and method of prayer. He used a technique that to me, at least, was a great trial. Without warning he would call on first one novice and then another to give an account of his prayer. We had to stand up and rehearse as best we could what had happened to us during the preceding hour. While this was a very practical way of teaching the proper method of prayer, it was an extremely embarrassing procedure for most of us, and painfully so to me. Even if the hour of prayer had been well spent, it was an ordeal to bare one's thoughts and feelings thus publicly. But as often as not truth compelled a shamed admission of a struggle against sleep, or a dull recital of uninspired thoughts on points one, two, and three; or, worst of all, a confession of numerous distractions, not very successfully combated.

I recall an occasion when the Master questioned me with persistence on one of these distractions. I was covered with confusion to have to explain that in the course of my prayer I heard a far-off train whistle, which brought to my mind the scene of my home in the suburbs of St. Louis, causing an attack of homesickness. The Devil was surely abroad that morning; I could fairly hear

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him chuckling at my shamefaced confession of having succumbed to his wiles.

Fortunately Father George was a kindly, understanding man. Feeling perhaps that I had been punished enough by this open avowal of failure, instead of censuring he encouraged me to greater effort. Always in this way he gained our confidence and respect. The result was that, shy though I was, in private confidence I had no difficulty in opening my soul to him, seeking his close guidance while I launched out on this new adventure of becoming a saint. Monks do not become saints merely through entering the monastery. As novices we brought with us natural characteristics, even idiosyncrasies. Those in authority vary greatly too, in tact, judgment, and kindness, as well as in ability to organize and manage, in firmness at keeping up the strict observance of the rule, in wise and sympathetic knowing when to relax severity in individual cases, and in all-round ability to keep the life of the monastery happy and harmonious.

The rule was read to us in these morning "chapters" during our novitiate and explained chapter by chapter, so that by the end of the year we should fully understand the nature of the obligations we were to assume by making our vows.

During the rest of the morning as novices we studied and had class with the Vice-Master, although during the noviceship advancement in learning took an entirely secondary place. The classes were held doubtless to prevent us from getting an overdose of spiritual things, and also to enable the superiors to judge our capacity as students.

Toward the end of the morning we read in our cells from some book on the spiritual life, and in theory we were also supposed to have a half hour's solitary walk in

the garden. In fact, however, the novices did a good deal of the daily cleaning of corridors, washrooms, choir, library, and so on at this time, and this menial work done usually left little time for our walk.

At eleven thirty we assembled in choir again to sing the canonical hours of Sext and None. Thence we proceeded to the refectory for the midday meal. We were allowed to speak only during recreation or by special permission of the superior, so silence prevailed in the refectory as it did throughout the rest of the monastery. During meals one of the novices always read to us, however, from a low pulpit placed in one corner of the room. This practice, which is always followed in Passionist monasteries, enables the monks to get in a great deal of reading in the course of the years, especially of books that otherwise they might hardly have either the time or the courage to attack. For example, the reading aloud in the refectory enables them to get through, in a year or two, works of history running to fifteen or twenty volumes.

Occasionally the superior ordered the reading of a more voluminous classic interrupted for a couple of weeks, substituting some newly published book that in his judgment the monks should know about. Thus, at least as far as serious literature was concerned, we were able to keep abreast of the times. Although the monastery library always contained sets of such classical authors as Scott, Fielding, Dickens, and Thackeray, fiction was never included in this reading aloud, and these classics were read only sparingly by the students in the study of literature and by such priests as had time and the inclination to spare for them. Later on, during long recreation periods when the weather prevented our going out, our directors used to read aloud books that might entertain

us while not filling our minds with worldly thoughts. The most satisfactory for this purpose was Dickens. With us *Pickwick Papers* was a roaring success. During the novitiate, however, the books to be read in the refectory were specially chosen in relation to our intensive training in spiritual things, and in consequence were of a nature not to distract but to edify.

Our food was of the simple, nourishing staple kind found in the poorer type of home. Vegetables raised in the monastery garden formed the bulk of our meals, as they were grown in abundance. Meat was served extremely sparingly; it was forbidden by rule every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, during the whole of Lent and Advent, and on the eves of special feasts. On a few of the greater festivals, however, more elaborate meals were permitted, on the theory that the body should partake of the rejoicing of the spirit.

The legend that monks are great gourmands, and sometimes even gourmets, may possibly have been true in some age, and may even be true still in some monasteries, though I doubt it very much; but it certainly is not true of the Passionists. From my experience I can testify that their food is common and often ill-prepared. The cook is by custom a lay brother, hence the tastiness of the food, austereley simple at best, is in proportion to his skill, native or acquired, in the culinary art. Some cooks, especially the younger ones, lacked experience and perhaps that knack which can make cooking something of an art, with the result that our meals were usually not of interest and often far from appetizing. Wholesome the food doubtless was, however, as the health of the monks was generally good, and especially so for men leading an extremely sedentary life. For myself I can say that my

mind was intent from the first on reading, so I got into the habit of eating without paying any attention at all to the food—indeed, hardly knowing what it was.

Grace before and after meals was rather longish prayers, recited aloud as we stood at our places at table. The tables were arranged around the four walls of the refectory. When the last monks finished and grace was said, we walked single file to a chapel and there made a few minutes' silent thanksgiving.

Recreation followed for about three quarters of an hour. According to the season and the weather, priests and lay brothers sat in the common room and talked or went out into the garden. The novices had their recreation with their Vice-Master or director, apart from the older, professed monks. Until he was ordained, after seven or eight years, the young monk had practically no intercourse with the rest of the community, as it was thought that his young enthusiasm and fervor might suffer even from contact with the older, sometimes more or less sophisticated members of the order.

Recreations were cheerful but not hilarious. Outdoors the novices walked in pairs, conversing in quiet tones. At intervals of ten or fifteen minutes one, whose turn it was for the week, called out in a loud voice: "Presence of God!" Then we all stopped and were silent for a half minute or so, to recollect ourselves. Throughout the day, in our cells or wherever we might be, this same practice was customary with us when we heard the big monastery clock strike the quarter hour, allowing us to recall momentarily the fact that God is present and to raise our hearts to Him. Perhaps as well as anything I can tell, this will illustrate how completely the monk's whole being was turned inward toward the things of the spirit and away from the "world." Even in the midst of study,

work, or our limited conversations we were constantly reminded by the passage of time to direct our thoughts and actions toward the one essential reality: God and eternity.

When we had to have recreation indoors, we novices occupied our hands with some sort of craft, such as bookbinding, making "disciplines," sewing birettas to be worn by the priests. Sometimes one of us would be called upon to recite from memory one of the letters from the Monk's Alphabet, a small handbook containing aphorisms, arranged under the letters of the alphabet and culled from the sayings of the old monks. Naturally the sayings were of the other-worldly type. When the letter A was assigned to me I sometimes recited: "*Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari: hoc tibi salubrius est et utilius quam laudari ab hominibus,*" which, being translated, reminded us that we should "Love to be unknown and to be reputed as nothing: this is more wholesome and more useful for you than to be praised by men."

The penance for not knowing the "letter" when called upon was either to say three Hail Marys while kneeling on one's hands, or the unsanitary and repulsive one of drawing three lines six inches in length on the floor with one's tongue. We did not need to be weak in fervor to believe that, though ingeniously devised to try to humble young monks, it was a nasty and revolting penance, which should have been abolished long since.

After recreation an hour was allowed by the rule for a siesta. This midday rest period had come from Italy, where everybody rests during the heat of the day; but in America most of the monks took advantage of this time without specified duty to get in some reading along lines of special interest. For myself there was always too little free time to read all the books and learn all the things

I was hungry to know; but even though sleeping in the middle of the day was so unnatural to Americans, we were forbidden by the rule as novices to stay up more than a half hour of the time, so gradually we became habituated to sleeping.

After siesta there was the singing of Vespers in choir, and a quarter hour of public reading from some standard work on asceticism. The rest of the afternoon we spent, like the morning, in study and class, until about five thirty, when we took a half hour's walk in the garden. This was followed by the chanting of Nones, and another hour of mental prayer. Then came supper, recreation, and night prayers, and we went to bed by eight thirty or nine at the latest.

It will be seen that every action of the day was regulated by the bell. Promptness was instilled as a virtue. If we were writing when the bell rang, the very word must be left unfinished. To emphasize the importance of this prompt and unquestioning obedience, the legend was often retold of the monk who had just finished gathering up crumbs from the table after his meal when the bell rang, leaving him no time even to put them on his plate. Unhesitatingly he carried them with him to the thanksgiving chapel. When prayers were over he went to the superior to get permission to dispose of his crumbs. But when he opened his hands, the crumbs had turned to pearls.

Another such legend, perhaps even more often told, has to do with the monk to whom the Infant Jesus had appeared in his cell. The bell rang, calling the monk to go and feed the poor at the monastery gate. Loath to leave his visitor and obey the call, he nevertheless excused himself and went to discharge his duty. Returning to his cell, he found the Infant grown to the Man Christ, who

addressed him in this wise: "Thus have I grown within thy heart. If thou hadst stayed, I must have gone."

This brief sketch of the day of a monk in the monastery may leave upon some minds the impression of a rather futile life, from the point of view of a world in distress and in need of all assistance possible from any source—assistance both material and spiritual. Let me say, however, that the Passionist monk's life is ordered on the theory that he will be able to bring spiritual relief and understanding to a discordant world only if he himself, finding peace, has become in fact that which he would preach.

Through the year of my novitiate one day was very like another. We were allowed to write and receive letters from home only three or four times a year, and our life was so protected that we knew nothing of what was taking place in the outside world. We were taught to practice perfect control of thought, word, and action and, as we were obliged, even when speaking or being spoken to, to keep our eyes fixed on the ground, we saw relatively little.

Control of the eyes was so strictly commanded by rule as an aid to recollection of the spirit that if we saw more than three faces during the day, even inadvertently, we must go to the Vice-Master in the evening and ask for a penance for our dissipation. Whenever we went on walks outside the monastery, we marched in a body, with downcast eyes looking neither to the right nor to the left, and must have presented a strange sight to passers-by.

There was an incident of dramatic interest to us in the visit paid the monastery by the General of the order, Padre Bernardo, who came over from Italy to see that

everything was in order and that the rule was being observed. During such a visitation every monk is questioned, every cell examined, every detail of the monastic routine gone into, to prevent creeping abuses and to correct any slackening in the strict observance of the rule.

Padre Bernardo was a very tall, thin man. Although he understood English well, he could speak it but little, so when he got around to seeing the novices, he quoted St. Paul to us in Latin, asking who could translate: "*Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo.*"

Up spoke Confrater Walter, saying: "I desire to die and to be with Christ." The implication to us was that, after a long life of labor and suffering in the vineyard, Padre Bernardo was expressing his heart's desire. His smile as he beamed on us in approval of our command of Latin was beatific. He walked slowly along before us, giving each his hand to kiss. When he came to me, he stopped and, turning to the Master with a smile and pointing to me, inquired: "Eskimo?" My black hair grew low on my forehead and I suppose my high cheekbones reminded him of the Eskimos. It was not altogether complimentary, yet it pleased me as a memory to treasure.

Beginning some time during the early months of this year of novitiate (I do not remember exactly when), a strange and comforting sense came of the objective presence near me of a living person, whom I identified as the God of my faith. At first this sense of the Divine Presence was only occasional, but soon it was practically always with me throughout the day. However others might explain it, this realization was as strong as would be the physical presence of another person in the same

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room. I did not conceive of this presence as having any form, but rather as a pervasive, dynamic, living existence. It was as though I became part of the enveloping atmosphere. I became consciously and physically aware of the truth of St. Paul's saying: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The striking and consoling character of this beautiful feeling was the almost tangible reality of the awareness, as if believing had been metamorphosed into seeing. My soul was in constant silent communion with this presence, and my heart welled up in a flood of outgoing emotion and love, as if my very inmost essence would pour itself out upon this Being who walked with me, whom I felt as my God and my Creator.

This abiding sense of the presence of God had an effect on my days. The chanting of the office, prayer, the religious exercises that filled the day, were no longer directed to a far-off God in a far-off heaven, but became fervent outpourings of one soul toward the One nearest to it; "nearer," as the poet has said, "than hands and feet," and more real. Even my study, reading, menial work were performed in the glow of realization of His nearness and were done directly for Him.

A heightened life flowed through me; the world became a beautiful place indeed. The leaves on the trees, the flowers, grass, the stars, all were new discoveries, as though I had never before known them. A great and vibrant peace descended upon me and I felt full to overflowing with joy. Nothing was difficult; no privation or even humiliation seemed to touch me. It would not have mattered had I been tortured, even burned alive. Just the taste of this new joy seemed to make all the austeries—so formidable in the external sense—seem as nothing. What did it matter whether one slept on a hard bed or a

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soft, or indeed slept at all? Whether the food I ate was rich or coarse, or even whether I ate at all? I did what I had to do, bowing, kneeling, praying, singing; but I did it all feeling concealed, yet liberated, in God.

What could critics of the monastic life, asserting the practical impossibility of human nature's leading a consistently chaste, poor, and obedient life, deprived of all that seems to make living worth while, know of this other world which, by some unrevealed magic, I, a nineteen-year-old boy, had entered in my novitiate, experiencing a satisfaction, a fulfillment, a happiness probably never experienced by those who fasten their hopes on the transient preoccupations of secular time?

As the year of novitiate drew toward a close, four of us who had survived thus far had to face the last obstacle in our way before the taking of the vows that would make us full-fledged members of the order. This was the final "chapter," held to decide whether at this last moment any of us should be turned back. We were called down-stairs in turn for a final questioning before the ballot was taken that would decide our fate. A black ball would wreck our hopes, sending us back home, defeated in the attempt to enter the cloister.

Only one of the companions who came with me from the preparatory college had failed to pass the "chapters" held at the three-, six-, and nine-month junctures. We never knew why this one failed to pass, whether he had been found wanting in some of the qualities required by the order or it was his own decision to withdraw. The only reference ever made to a vacant chair at morning instruction would be a casual word from the Master: "Brother so-and-so is no longer with us." Inevitably on hearing the words our pulses tensed for it was awesome

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to think of losing a vocation, once one thought to have it. But perhaps the Master's announcement served its purpose best as a greater stimulus to renewed fidelity in our duties, making a deeper impression than an hour's lecture on failure possibly could.

And so the moment came when I was called in for my last "chapter." The superior and priests of the community were gathered in solemn session, with Father John Baptist, the chief superior of the American Province, as head or chairman. I was led to him and knelt at his feet. There must actually have been more, but I can recall only two questions put to me on that momentous occasion, and my answers, which engraved themselves on my memory. First Father John Baptist asked me why I desired to become a Passionist.

"My desire is to devote my entire life to the service of God, Father," I replied humbly.

"At times, my son," he said, "there has been mention of your desire to be a lay brother rather than a priest. Are you willing now to leave the deciding of this vital question to your superiors?"

"I am willing, Father," I said, satisfied that God's will for me would be expressed through their decision.

Father John Baptist took occasion to comment also on the occasional slight stammer in my speech. "But we do not think it serious enough," he said gravely, "to prevent your becoming a priest." Probably he was saying this for the information of the assembly as a whole, which held my fate in its hands and, after thoroughly discussing my good and bad points, would vote on my acceptance or rejection.

Then I retired to my cell. In the ordinary course of events we should not know our fate until the following morning, when the Vice-Master would speak of it at in-

struction. But Father Stanislaus, the Vice-Master, sympathized with the acute suspense and anxiety engulfing us and late in the afternoon felt prompted by the kindness of his heart to whisper that each of us had passed his last test.

The next morning we were formally told what secretly we already knew, and also that the date of our profession of vows had been set for the third Sunday of September, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, which in that year, 1896, fell on the 21st day of the month.

For ten days we made a retreat of most intensive preparation for this greatest event of our lives thus far. Time heretofore given to classes and study was now continuously devoted to spiritual reading, meditation, and examination of conscience. On the eve of entering upon this new life we made a general confession of all our sins of the past; thus did we strive to purify ourselves still more of the world and its past, so that in very truth we should be able to offer ourselves "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

In the three years since deciding to live my life in terms of eternity rather than of secular time I had pursued my ideal with enthusiasm and steadfastness of purpose, and, if possible, I was now even more convinced that I had chosen the right path, "for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." My experience of the monastic life during the novitiate had confirmed rather than modified my determination to dedicate my whole being and all my years unreservedly to God and His service. Thus for Ildefonso the day of his solemn profession of vows came as one of immense joy and fulfillment and not, as it might appear to an outsider, of painful sacrifice and renunciation.

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Though even more solemn, the ceremony of Profession, or taking of the vows, was similar in many ways to that of clothing with the habit, a year earlier. The church and the altar were decorated as for the festivals of grandeur and joy, and a congregation filled the church to overflowing. As we lay face-down on the sanctuary floor, covered by the black pall that symbolizes death to things of the world, the Passion of Christ according to St. John was sung over us.

Consecrating our lives as monks to the service of God, we took the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

A vow is a solemn promise or pledge made to God to perform certain acts or to follow a certain manner of life. By the promise made to Another, to do a thing that we were free to do or not to do, we were imposing on ourselves an obligation that comes under the virtue of fidelity. A promise made for a consideration would be a contract, falling under the virtue of justice; but a promise made to God with the sanction of the Church becomes an act of religion, entailing a very grave obligation, the violation of which would be of a more serious nature than that of mere injustice or infidelity, taking on the guilt of sacrilege.

In dedicating to God our whole beings as monks we were seeking to sacrifice those fundamental human activities and pleasures to which human nature gives a natural right, but which bind the individual to the earthly life, causing him to live in terms of his imperfect self. In the monk's hope to become thenceforth a citizen of heaven as his ultimate destiny, and to work solely for the interests of eternity, the monk gladly renounces his citizenship of earth, with all its privileges and joys.

In the eyes of the Church and of canon law the monk

becomes incapable of ownership, and by the vow of poverty he renounces any possessions he may have and all right forever to possess or own any material thing. Before taking our vows we were required to dispose of any and all material possessions. We were privileged to give to the poor, our families, or the monastery whatever we had to give. For myself, on the eve of my profession I had been advised to leave all I had to my parents, and I signed a document doing this and making them my legal heirs, so that if by circumstance any material wealth should come to me after my vows had been taken, it would revert automatically to them. If I should earn anything after entering the order—for example, by writing a book from which there were royalties—it would simply become the property of the monastery.

Everything needed for my daily use—clothing and books—belonged to the order, not to me. I would not speak of *my* habit or *my* sandals, but of *our* habit, *our* sandals. The words *my* and *mine* are seldom heard within the cloister walls, and most novices have the disconcerting experience at one time or another of provoking a wave of laughter by asking out of sheer habit permission of the novice master “to wash *our* feet.” Only superiors have the custody of money; if an individual monk should need car-fare to take him to a distant church to preach, for instance, he presents himself on his knees at the rector’s desk and asks for it.

This withdrawal from the joys of ownership brought its own compensation, in freedom from any worry whatever over material things. Food, clothing, books, all one’s essential needs being cared for, the subject of finances, occupying so much of the time and energy of the man “in the world” simply does not exist for the monk. With one blow he has lopped off all the anxieties over ways and

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means that are the common lot of the world's people. This brings a sense of liberation, contributing much toward that peace which envelops the monastery and makes possible the concentration of one's whole energies on the study and meditation that compose the greater portion of a monk's life. No monk would be willing to change back from the peace of his economic security to the joys of possession, with their inevitable fears, envies, and worries.

By the second vow, the vow of chastity, the monk pledges himself not only to refrain from all physical acts of obtaining sexual pleasure, but also to keep his mind free of all the thoughts, images, and desires that even remotely might stir the sexual impulse. To this end the strictest guard is kept over the senses, especially the sense of sight. In the novitiate we had formed the habit of keeping our eyes on the ground as part of the great emphasis on control of the senses. The mind and imagination, which perhaps are the chief sources of sexual desire, became so disciplined that the least shadow of any thought that could conceivably excite the senses was instantly banished. During the first years our reading was strictly censored and even study of the classics confined to expurgated editions.

With all this stress placed on mental purity, and more especially with the mind constantly preoccupied with the profound study required for preparation for the priesthood, keeping the vow of chastity is not nearly so difficult as outsiders suppose. The greatest protection of all, of course, is the atmosphere, both physical and spiritual, in which the monk lives. The hours spent each day in prayer and meditation create for him a world wholly unlike the world in which ordinary men live. Hardly anything for-

eign to the nature of this psychic atmosphere could find entry, much less permanently disturb it. In short, the average monk would have no difficulty in observing his vow, because that sort of life had become so habitual with him that any idea of living otherwise would be preposterous in the extreme, not even entering his mind.

The reason for the vow is to free a man from the entanglements and distractions that come with family life, enabling him to concentrate all his energies on "the one thing necessary," the kingdom of God. My confidence was complete that this end could be attained, that much good fruit for humanity had been and would be borne on the tree of monasticism.

Before leaving the subject of the vow of chastity I should like to take note of the theory, held by many and especially by the old schools of occultism, that celibacy increases the mental vigor and creative faculties of a man. The theory holds that there is a sublimation of the life forces, and that energy thus unused on the physical plane is transmuted into spiritual power and insight.

Chastity always has been prescribed for the searchers for the Holy Grail, and was a necessary preparation for the initiations into the higher mysteries of the older religions, of which degrees in Masonry are a faint echo coming down through the ages. Were not the mystics, those great adventurers into the unexplored and unknown fields of consciousness, known for their chaste lives? As in all the great world religions, the instinct of Christianity to exalt the virtue of chastity is very deeply rooted in the wisdom of the ages.

The third monastic vow, by which, as young aspirants to perfection, we renounced that most precious of human inheritances, the right freely to dispose one's own life

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and activities, was the vow of obedience. By this vow the monk promises to obey his superiors in all things, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the order. Limitation of the authority of the superior to the rule of the order safeguards the monk's will against that absolute submission which, under exceptional conditions, could degenerate into abject enslavement. The monk retains constitutional rights, the rule being, as it were, the constitution; in the rare case of a command given beyond the tenor and intent of the rule, and in the hardly possible case of a command to do evil, the monk has the right to refuse obedience and to appeal to higher authority within the order, and even to the supreme authority of the Church.

But for all intents and purposes the monk fully surrenders his natural right to dispose his actions as he sees fit, ordering his life, his studies, his comings and goings and all his occupations thenceforth according to the will of his immediate and higher superiors. As the superior deems best for the common good and the glory of God, the monk is transferred from one monastery to another. He is appointed and in complete obedience turns to a position of teaching, preaching, missionary work, or whatever other activity is deemed expedient. These assignments often go against the natural inclinations of the individual. While I found it very easy to obey, nevertheless at times I felt my superior used poor judgment in the special work to which he assigned me. But had I been obstinate, preferring my judgment to his, it would have required from him a formal command "by virtue of holy obedience," to lay upon me the grave obligation of my vow. Cases are exceedingly rare when a superior is compelled to use the full force of his authority; they have to do either with an almost insuperable reluctance on the

part of the monk or with an individual who already has lost the spirit of his vocation. In the former case superiors hold themselves bound to carefully reconsider before imposing an injunction that is ironclad; but in the second case the sooner the almost inevitable separation of the unfaithful monk from the order is brought about, the better for all concerned.

Obedience comes more easily to some natures than to others. Those who have entered the order in more mature years, when the habit of self-direction is more fixed, usually find it harder to give up their own will and judgment than do those who enter young and learn early to adjust themselves to submission.

Although the Holy Ghost is presumed to guide the election of superiors at the triennial chapters, one may be pardoned for thinking that—perhaps for the further trial and purification of the monks—on occasion He allows certain men to slip by who lack some of the qualifications of good heads of monasteries. Then much undue suffering and unhappiness is caused to individuals, through a lack of patience, charity, and paternal understanding in him upon whom rest the welfare and happiness of the community. Fortunately rare is the man who, on being chosen superior, forgets that he is but one among brethren, the “servant of the servants of God” as the rule beautifully puts it, and assumes an austerity of bearing that keeps him aloof from his community, making his authority weigh heavily on all.

Ordinarily the superior is a man of mature years, fatherly nature, and kindly disposition, to whom the monk can go with his difficulties and find a sure sympathy, comfort, and encouragement. Then the service of God is pleasant and the yoke of obedience light.

In the older orders the monastic vows are taken for

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life, but of late years, because of changed and changing conditions, the Church in approving new orders—especially those for women—has required that the vows be taken first for shorter periods, of one or three years, so that if the religious, through experience or maturer judgment, should deem himself unsuited for the life he has chosen, he may freely return to the world without the burden on his conscience of infidelity to his vows. This limitation of time also permits the order to eliminate those who have proved themselves unequal to or unfit for the cloistered life. But even in these newer orders the time comes after a certain period, I believe, when the monk or nun is permitted to make his or her consecration complete by the taking of perpetual vows.

In medieval times the recalcitrant monk was incarcerated until he showed signs of reformation. Those days are passed, though there are doubtless instances still wherein a harassed superior would like the authority to turn the key of a prison cell on some particularly difficult monk for a cooling-off period.

Nowadays the unfaithful monk may be expelled from the order after all reasonable efforts toward his correction have failed. There have been instances in which this was a necessary procedure to avoid scandal and to preserve the peace and well-being of the monastery.

I have turned aside here from my main narrative of personal experience to describe the meaning and application of the vows because the world little understands the heroic venture embodied in the monastic way of life. The true explanation for it lies in the faith from which it sprang. In the psychology of that faith monasticism may rightly be considered one of the greatest ventures of the race at high and noble living.

John Tettemer

I have spoken of the average monk, suggesting that the honest living of a celibate life is not a constant struggle but rather, once the original consecration is made, a sweet, peaceful existence. This is true for as long as the spirit of that consecration continues. It is easy to be a good monk as long as the pristine fervor endures which prompted the resignation of self to God. Let the individual monk or the monastery as an institution fall away from that original spirit, and real disaster may follow. That is the reason for the visitations from Italy by generals of orders, to observe any slackening in observance of the rule and to correct it.

I speak here of monasticism as I knew it, and at its best. It is neither fair nor kindly to judge institutions by their failures unless these are the rule rather than the exception. From the study of history and from personal experience, it is my contention that the unfaithful monk and the degenerated monastery are not only exceptions but extremely rare exceptions, traceable in nowise to the rule of the order, but rather to human weakness.

For me the high point of profession came when I knelt before the Master, robed in his cope of white and gold, and repeated with all the ardent fervor of a medieval knight the simple formula by which I pledged myself to serve God for the rest of my life as a Passionist monk, taking thereto the vows of perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience, and sealing the pact with an oath to persevere faithfully therein till death.

The Master pinned on the side of my habit over the heart, and on the left side of the mantle, the white insignia of the order, the shield, about six inches long by three and a half wide, bearing the motto *Jesu Christi Passio* inscribed in a heart in white on a black ground and

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surmounted by a white cross. A long rosary was attached then to my leathern girdle, on the left side, and in my belt was inserted a crucifix, about twelve inches in length, of black wood, with a brass figure of the dying Christ.

Again, as in the ritual of receiving the habit, the crown of thorns was placed on the head, and a cross laid upon the shoulders. As the great strains of the *Te Deum* ascended to heaven, we made our first procession around the church as professed Passionist monks.

It was not incongruous that the rest of the day should be given over to festivities and warm rejoicings. The older monks embraced us, welcoming us into fellowship with lively joy. Our novice companions were made happy too at our successful completion of the time of trial and preparation, and were doubtless encouraged in their own hope of arriving safely at that same glorious goal.

I can perhaps best describe my own feelings as those of a traveler at sea who, after a long and uncertain voyage through vast distances, has arrived at last in safe harbor. Always at the back of my mind had been the fear of shipwreck before I should reach this haven; but now I was safe in the peace of God's will and love, and a happy calm enveloped my soul. Let life now hold what it would for me, I had attained my heart's desire.

I cannot compare this satisfaction and peace with any emotion experienced in the attainment of earthly goals. If the old-fashioned idea of heaven is true, the peace I now knew must resemble rather the final peace that possesses the soul waking to find itself in that eternal haven where uncertainty and fear never enter.

VI

Having professed my vows at the end of the novitiate, I began in earnest the long course of formal and intensive study that would prepare me for ordination. I was twenty years old. If I had persisted in my first inclination to become a lay brother, I should have been sent, with others who had chosen that path or who had not sufficiently evidenced talent to become priests, to one of the other monasteries of the order, there to begin a life-work of service to the monastic community, as cook, tailor, infirmarian, gardener, sandal-maker, or perhaps mechanic. I should have lived the same life as the priests, have given the same amount of time to prayer with the exception of the chanting of the Divine Office; and while the students and priests were studying, I should have done my part of the domestic work in the monastery.

Among the Passionists, unlike some other orders, the lay brothers associate with the priests, eating with them, joining in the same recreation. It makes for a more united community and, by eliminating discriminations and special privileges, a happier life for all. This is the *true* (as compared with the *political*) form of communism, where each gives his best to the common good and is equally cherished by all. It is a communism that I doubt could exist in a purely economic society, wherein each member, in the very nature of things, would be serving his own personal ambitions rather than the welfare of the whole.

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The religious community flourishes because the members are utterly united in a common high purpose, toward which the individual self is enthusiastically dedicated, submerging petty, personal seekings in a passion for something outside itself.

In the Passionist Order, instead of being sent to one great university where all other students of the order pursue their studies, the newly professed student is sent to one of the monasteries where a class is being taught that is suited to his scholastic development. The Passionists have adopted this method of having a class in each monastery rather than mass teaching in one college because of the wisdom of having a large body of monks in every house, in order to keep up the old monastic custom of chanting the Divine Office in choir at the traditional hours throughout the day and night. Many of the priests in the community are often absent on missionary duty, and the solemn choral service would suffer in quality and inspiration were there not a class of students to maintain the burden throughout the year.

I embarked on the seas of my years of study and spiritual training under the direction of the same Father Stanislaus who had been our Vice-Master during the novitiate, and who had come with us, upon our profession of vows, to Holy Cross Monastery, at Mount Adams, in Cincinnati. I thus began my student life under ideal conditions, having as lector and director a superior whom I knew and loved and in whom I could confide. For three years I was going to have the advantage of his direction and his wisdom as spiritual guide.

Once our footsteps had become securely placed in the path of our calling, no human knowledge was regarded as foreign to the work of the priest. Pursuing a life of intense examination of theological and secular subjects,

collaterally we continued the systematic study and practice of the spiritual life of virtue and the mystical life of prayer begun in the novitiate. Father Stanislaus was my embodiment of the method of putting students under close supervision of one or more professors of the subjects studied, and the care of a spiritual director; Father Stanislaus was my immediate superior, and my guide along the path to perfection to which my life was committed.

As students we led a much more protected life than even the full-fledged monks. We associated only with our fellow students and our directors and professors, not being permitted even to speak to any of the other members of the community except of course the rector or prior of the monastery. The purpose of this is to protect the newly planted flower of one's spiritual life from any chance exposure to the rough winds of the world. We read no newspapers or magazines, knew nothing of happenings outside the cloister except as they were reported to us by our directors. The Spanish-American War took place while I was preparing for ordination, and I did not know of it at all.

For recreation and exercise we had a half hour's solitary walk morning and evening, and a longer walk in a body one afternoon a week. On very rare occasions there was a whole day's outing. According to the strict rule, rigidly observed in Italy, games of all sorts, either indoors or out, are strictly forbidden. But the more active nature and customs of Americans were taken into account with respect to monasteries in this country, and the rule was relaxed to allow students to play baseball and tennis on their recreation days and to skate in winter. Though this dispensation did much to preserve the health of American students, it did smack somewhat of worldliness and

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distracted us more or less. The kind of baseball game in which there had been no hits, no runs, and no errors was likely to leave us finding difficulty in keeping awake in choir during the hour of prayer, to say nothing of during the hour and a half of chanting and prayer at Matins in the middle of the night. For the time of indoor recreation, after lunch and supper, each student, in order not to be idle, had some manual occupation, bookbinding, making birettas, or carving the signs or emblems worn by the Passionists on the left breast of the habit.

We were expected to converse in Latin for the first quarter hour. During the earlier years of study, before Latin was mastered, the crimes committed by the young monks against syntax may be imagined. Even after considerable study it was necessary to have some gift for circumlocutions in order to converse about such modern inventions as were undreamed-of by Cæsar and Cicero.

Our study was planned to give a fair foundation of all human knowledge, and a thorough training in history, philosophy, canon law, theology, and the Scriptures. Great emphasis was laid on Latin because the liturgy of the Church and most of the textbooks in philosophy and theology are written in that tongue. After we completed the classics—which we might or might not have studied before entering the order—two years were concentrated on study of philosophy. First a thorough course in Scholastic philosophy, founded on Aristotle, started with a basic training in logic and epistemology, followed by general metaphysics, which, it seems to me, is philosophy proper, in the Aristotelian sense. Then we had special metaphysics, or cosmology; psychology—the applied variety was just coming into vogue, but we had very little inkling of it—then natural theology, and finally ethics.

Although our text was Aristotle as presented by the

Schoolmen, we made a pretty fair study of the other schools of philosophy as their theories crossed ours during the course. For instance, we became acquainted with Plato when treating of the nature and origin of ideas, with Leibnitz when studying the theories of the ultimate composition of matter, and so on. Thus we got a general if not exhaustive knowledge of the peculiar characteristics of the several philosophers and their systems, from the older Greeks down through the Arabs, Germans, French, and English to the moderns, beginning with Bergson.

I doubt if any other two years of my life were so fascinatingly engrossing as those two spent in the study of philosophy, when, as a young man, I delved into the great mystery of existence, into realms of thought and speculation utterly new to me, seeking the ultimate whatness and whyness of the universe and of myself.

Could it be that the one flaw in our system of study—one existing perhaps in practically all human teaching and study—was that we studied as from a fixed, known center of truth accepted as right, whereby we sought to prove and elaborate by the most highly developed instrument invented by man: namely, Scholastic logic, based on the syllogism? From this certitude of grasping the truth, we studied Plato and Plotinus, Kant and Hegel, Berkeley and Hume. Not with sympathy, not objectively, not supposing for one moment that they might be right, but rather to find out wherein they were wrong and to refute them.

With the study of philosophy we carried the side studies of the natural sciences, history, mathematics, and English. When the two years of philosophy were completed, we began a four-year study of theology.

The first two years are given to dogmatic theology,

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which treats of religion in general, Christianity, its foundation and evidences, the Church and its authority to teach, and its different doctrines and dogmas. After the introductory part, concerning the evidences of Christianity and proof of the authority of the Church, from the Scriptures taken as merely historical books, we were faced with a new order of proof in theses—namely, the proof of faith, as drawn from the Scriptures and the definitions of the Church. Some students, myself among them, found the study of theology less interesting than that of philosophy, wherein human reason alone is the guide, and the proof from authority—even that of Aristotle—the weakest of all.

With dogmatic theology we studied Church history, and the Scriptures from the historical and critical standpoint. The higher criticism of the nineteenth century had called forth this comparatively recent addition to the curriculum. It furnishes an excellent example of the adaptability of the Church to the changing world about her, and to the growth of secular knowledge. While she is ultraconservative, holding fast as long as possible to the old traditions, whenever any discovery of science or history makes the old position untenable her scholars and theologians form tentative interpretations and theories to fill the breach. At first these are considered advanced, and dangerous to the faith; but gradually they may be taken as new attitudes toward a newly established fact. Without this minimum degree of flexibility the Church would long ago have ceased to exist.

She will not adjust herself, however, to new theories and philosophies, notwithstanding how individual members may toy with them. This was shown dramatically in the early years of the twentieth century when Pius X

crushed inexorably the efforts of the modernists within the Church to adjust Catholic teaching to the subjective German philosophy of the day.

One source of enjoyment for me during the period of my philosophical and theological studies was a weekly gathering, in the nature of a seminar, that we called "the circle." One student would be given a thesis to defend against all comers. He would prepare, in Latin of course, a reasoned and more or less learned paper expounding and proving his thesis. This he would read to the circle from the professor's chair in the presence of the professor also and, on occasion, of the rest of the community. When he had completed his argument, all in strict syllogistic form, the students and any visitors were free to refute his thesis by any arguments they could conjure up, though always in syllogistic form, so that the issue remained clear. Then the proponent was able to take up in turn the major and minor premise and the conclusion, admitting, denying, or distinguishing each in turn and so refuting the objection.

We flung ourselves into these mental gymnastics with great zest; they helped to sharpen our reasoning faculties and added a fuller and deeper understanding of the question in hand. Not the least of the enjoyment came, I am afraid, from the fact that we were allowed for the nonce to become heretics, atheists, pantheists, or what not and to argue with all the subtlety and malignity we could summon to put the poor defender of the truth "in the sack," as we called it when he was floored and could no longer answer our objections. The professor would stand by as a sort of referee to bar unfair holds, as it were, or sophisms, if the defender was not keen or alert enough to detect them; and finally, also, to cap the whole per-

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formance with any elucidations he might think timely.

These sessions were valuable as well in bringing out that the Catholic Church has a tradition of meeting fairly all the criticisms flung against her, striving through her scholars and apologists to defend her position. We learned that it is not easy to put them "in the sack," for they are trained by years of close and exact reasoning and know how to thrust as well as parry.

At the conclusion of dogmatic theology came two years of moral theology for us as Passionist students. It was a study of great complexity, of equal importance with its sister branch of dogma, treating of the moral obligations of the Catholic, as based on the natural science of ethics and on the laws of the Church. Dogmatic theology treats of the faith of the Church, moral theology of its discipline. What rendered these two years of paramount importance to us was the fact that the future priest would also be the confessor, counselor, admonisher, rebuker, and even judge of the faithful, not only in their conduct but in their very thoughts and emotions. We must therefore acquire a knowledge not only of the general laws of the Church, but of the special rights, duties, and obligations of every class of person—the merchant, the ruler, the rich and the poor, the wage-earner and the employer of men, the married and the single, the parent and the child, the professional and the laborer. The priest must not impose a stricter obligation than the law imposes, else he would become responsible for the sin of the penitent; nor may he, out of compassion for human weakness, minimize the duties imposed by the law. Therefore the future priest must study the nature of law itself—its sources, its binding power, the nature of sin, the different degrees of culpability, the meaning of justice, the foundation and laws of contract; sex (a thorny subject indeed!),

its natural ends, its perversions, its legitimate use and its abuse, marriage, its rights and obligations, its impediments natural and ecclesiastical, the special obligations of every state of society, and so on through all the varied aspects of human conduct.

As every lawyer must know, there is a great difference between knowing the underlying principles of law and the practical application of them in an individual case; and some of the greatest theorists in moral theology have refused to hear confessions because of the great difficulty and enormous responsibility involved in applying the theory to the complex action of a human being, with the accompanying attenuating circumstances of ignorance, whole or partial, outward pressure and inward passion in varying degrees, and so forth.

To accustom the student to the soul-racking duty of dealing with the individual case, once a week, instead of "the circle," as in philosophy and dogmatic theology, another species of seminar was held. The lector would write up a "moral case" involving certain principles and certain actions of an imaginary penitent. By lot one of the students would be called upon to discuss thoroughly the principles involved and then apply them to the case in hand. After he had finished, each in turn would criticize the solution rendered and add his views. Finally the professor would sum up, pointing out, very likely, fine points of the law that had escaped the inexperienced students and giving the correct solution.

Parenthetically, this same practice of solving a "moral case" is carried on in every Passionist monastery once a week for all the priests, no matter how long they have been hearing confessions, in order to keep fresh in their minds the theory and practice of moral theology and to keep them up to date on later decrees and rulings.

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During these two years we studied canon law and liturgy as side subjects. Canon law was very interesting to me, as it grew out of the traditions of the old Roman law, that wonderful monument left to future ages by the Roman legal mind. We did not have the advantage and convenience of the revised codes, which came later as the fruit of the years of labor and collaboration of all the bishops and many leading canonists under the headship of one of the Roman congregations. It was one among the great works initiated by Pius X, and not completed until many years after his death.

Canon law is, as it were, the constitutional law of the Church and deals with all the many parts and institutions in this complex organization. The laws concern the cardinals, election of the popes, the bishops, the Roman congregations, the religious orders of men and women, councils general and local, parish priests, and so on from the highest to the lowest. The sources of the canon laws are the decrees of the popes and councils, and of the congregations of cardinals in matters under their several jurisdictions, which latter must have the approval of the pontiff who is the head of each congregation, the ranking cardinal being termed, merely, prefect.

A final year was given to study of sacred eloquence and of the Scriptures, taken now not in the critical sense but as source material for the edification of the faithful. During this year I came to the subject of preaching and sermon-writing, under a priest who had achieved success in missionary work and hence knew the art of successful preaching.

This was the scholastic work of the young monks during our student years. But no matter how strenuous our intellectual life, even more ardently did we pursue what was the principal end for us, sanctity of life. The training

in prayer, begun in the novitiate, was expanded by intensive study of books on the nature of prayer and on mystical theology, under the constant, intimate guidance of my spiritual director.

While I sat meekly in private conference with the father director, my difficulties, failures, and progress were dissected and discussed. The director drew my attention to books I should read, and pointed out faults of character I should overcome. Always he encouraged me to greater and greater efforts to grow in spiritual life, being ruthless in tearing out by the roots the obstacles in the form of human traits and weaknesses. "Your religious dedication of yourself through the profession of your vows is only the beginning, my son," he explained to me gravely. "Your ultimate goal is final consummation of complete union with God."

We had certain times of the day set apart for spiritual reading in place of study. A full hour each morning and another each evening were spent in practice of mental prayer and contemplation. Each Sunday morning we made a brief examination and review of the week, and once a month made a one-day retreat, checking ourselves on all points of devotion, striving to keep alive the first fervor of the novitiate, which, our superiors knew well, tends to cool during the absorbing studies in preparation for the priesthood.

Once a year, in common with all the monks of the community, we devoted eight days to a great retreat, during which all study was laid aside and our whole time and energy were given to examination of conscience, meditation, spiritual reading, and listening to rousing sermons by a retreat-master. One would think the young seekers after God were the most hardened sinners, the way we—and often the retreat-master as well—went

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after ourselves during the first days of the retreat, vigorously calling to mind the waywardness of human nature, and the punishment awaiting the unfaithful servant. Yet this motif of fear, appropriate to the purgative life, soon gave place, in mid-retreat, to hope as we entered the illuminative way, and the subjects of sermons and meditations were turned toward the rewards promised the faithful servant. And finally, entering the unitive way, all thought of personal punishment or reward was put off, and the contemplation of the beauty and love of God aroused a renewed and corresponding love and ardor in our young souls, and we reconsecrated our lives to God at the closing of the retreat, by a solemn renewal of our religious vows, in company with all the members of the community. Thus, year by year, the joy of the original taking of the vows was renewed; the tendency of human nature, even at its best, to backslide was checked, and we started out on another year with new fervor and firm resolutions that nothing should be lacking in the complete sacrifice of ourselves to God.

I had the advantage of Father Stanislaus's direction and his wisdom as spiritual guide until in our last year of classical studies he ceased to be my lector. I felt very grateful for all I learned from him. He urged us with his youthful Irish enthusiasm to aim for the highest, never to be satisfied with any half measure. Father Stanislaus was a living example of the self-abnegation and lofty contemplation he preached, yet at the same time he was so cheerful and light-hearted that to us service of God became a constant joy, never a gloomy burden. I think we learned more with him than we would have with a more eminent scholar, because our class was small, and with him we worked all things out together, as it were, thus finding out for ourselves much that we might have

missed at the feet of a professor more learned but more aloof.

It is not to be thought that no human woes could penetrate the atmosphere of the monastery. In our last year of classical study a tragedy occurred that left a mark on us all, especially on Father Stanislaus.

One afternoon on one of our customary longer walks we made for a swift-flowing stream that empties into the Ohio River near Cincinnati. (It seems to me it is called the Little Miami.) As it was a warm day, we put on bathing suits and had a swim. A fellow student, Confrater Walter, who had been in the novitiate with me and who was a fair swimmer, after a little while undertook to swim across to the other bank, perhaps a hundred and fifty feet or so away.

Suddenly someone cried out: "Father—"

Confrater Maurice took up the cry: "Walter is having trouble, Father!"

We shouted to Confrater Augustine, who was rowing about in a boat: "Hurry—hurry—Augustine—get to him—give him an oar!"

Poor Augustine! Being a poor oarsman at best, and excited and confused by the sudden demand on him, he was quite unable to turn the boat around quickly enough to reach Confrater Walter in time.

None of us was a good swimmer. Father Stanislaus himself was prevented forcibly from diving in to find the body. "Go home, all of you," he directed us. "I will find help."

We hurried into our clothes and obeyed him; a forlorn picture we made, eight or nine young monks tramping across the countryside saying the rosary aloud for the soul of Confrater Walter. It seemed that Father Stanis-

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laus would never come. What would we say to the rector of the monastery?

Father Stanislaus soon found a boat with a couple of fishermen. They recovered Walter's body in fourteen feet of water, but all efforts to restore him to life failed. The rector could only send word to his mother in Attleboro, Massachusetts, and prepare for the funeral.

For days and weeks a gloom hovered over the monastery. We had been much attached to Walter, for he had a most lovable character. The loss was dreadful to me; we had been close since our days together in the preparatory school. Besides the pain of loss, the shock on our impressionable young minds of the uncertainty of human life served to deepen our resolution to live for God alone and strengthened our determination to persevere to the end.

Perhaps it was upon Father Stanislaus that the deepest mark remained. He felt responsible for Confrater Walter's death. Life became for him more serious, if that were possible, and his religious life deepened so noticeably that he stood out as one of the most spiritual men of the order.

At the end of this school year Father Stanislaus conducted us back to the Monastery of Our Lady of Good Counsel, at Normandy, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. There we were to begin the study of philosophy under the tutelage of Father Alfred, and be united to another class of students, who were also about to become philosophers. It meant a great deal to me that Father Stanislaus would remain with us as spiritual director of this newly formed class.

The monastery at Normandy, unlike the one in Cincinnati around which gradually the town had grown, was

in the country, in the center of perhaps twenty acres of land. This followed the plan laid down in the rule of the order requiring that monasteries be built outside of cities, but, alas, the mushroom growth of American cities frustrated the efforts of many early fathers to adhere to the rule. Normandy, however, still remained secluded, and this gave us a great advantage in beauty, walks, and space for games, even skating in winter on a small lake well within the grounds.

I had not been at Normandy long before I experienced a new intellectual awakening that seemed to put an entirely new face on life for me. Until then I had taken the world and myself more or less for granted; but now a new feeling of wonder at it all began to fill me, and I awoke, as it were, for the first time to the mystery of life.

One day, looking in the mirror while shaving (this was the only time we were permitted to look in a mirror) I called myself by name, saying: "Ildefonso, who are you?" Whether this sudden amazement at the riddle of life comes to everyone at some time—a sort of age of puberty of the mind—or whether I had brought it on by the deeper study of philosophy, I do not know; I only knew that it was a most pleasantly bewildering feeling.

A worldly element entered into the fact of my being at Normandy. My parents lived only a few miles away and to their delight they were thus able to see more of me than they had ever been able to hope for when I left home to become a monk. Not that they were allowed officially to visit me more than three or four times a year, but they were near me, and every Sunday they could see me at Mass in the public chapel of the monastery.

Besides, my mother's Irish wit and ingenuity figured out a way of seeing me even oftener. Knowing we had a whole day's outing several times a year, my mother, with

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a truly remarkable air of innocence and Christian benevolence, would invite the father director and all the students just to spend their day's outing on her property—"Surely, Father, you wouldn't want to see it just goin' to waste now, would you?"—and partake of food that, no doubt, was only going stale in her pantry! To us the invitation was almost too good to be true. Ordinarily on outings we took our own food, a bother to prepare and carry, and at best nothing but a cold lunch.

Of course there was the matter of the rule, which said distinctly that the monks were permitted to see their parents only three or four times a year, carefully arranged. With a bit of casuistry worthy a Jesuit, however (*pace, Brother Jesuit, I know well that no slur is merited; still, you wouldn't deny me the fun of a little dig too good to forego, would you?*), Father Stanislaus reasoned that as all the students were invited, my meeting my parents might be considered as in the nature of a coincidence, and hence not in collision with the rule. I dare say too that this good Irishman, whose heart was as big as the moon, felt the urge to give happiness to a fellow Irishman, my mother—and that he was not averse to encountering some new food too!

So it came about that we had several grand picnics at my home. We played baseball in the fields, enjoyed a stupendous meal of good things unknown to the monastery refectory, and sat around in comfort and joy, singing and playing the old songs. I recall wondering once or twice how on earth my mother ever managed to find room and food for such a ravenous horde of monks; but we asked her no questions and she told us no lies, but beamed on us all, joking with us and clucking over us so that we bestowed on her the title "Mother of the Class."

Another incident during these years at Normandy, however, brought fear and anguish to her heart. One winter's day our class was playing hockey—we called it just plain shinny—on the frozen field. Suddenly one of the opposing team, Confrater Luke, missed in a wild swing at the puck, hitting me a violent blow with his stick, laying a place just over the eye bare to the bone.

It bled furiously. I was led away toward the monastery with a handkerchief clamped to the wound. Poor Luke! With a knack for always doing the wrong thing, which kept him in trouble almost constantly, he twitched up the handkerchief to inspect the damage. The cold air stopped the bleeding abruptly, with the result that I wound up spending many days in the infirmary with such a high fever that there was considerable doubt of my living.

My mother, with the proneness to suffering that holy people seem to have, had already lost three of her children, and now she was absolutely certain that I, too, was about to be taken from her. She begged to visit my bedside. "Sure isn't it the place of a mother to be beside a dying son, I'd like to know!" she said fiercely to the rector.

As gently as he could, the rector explained to her the laws of the Church regarding those monastic orders which are called "of strict enclosure," for they were extremely rigid concerning the admittance of women across the threshold of the cloister. Such a flouting of the rule would *ipso facto* mean excommunication for all involved. My mother felt cruelly deprived and made it so abundantly clear to the rector that he was preparing to get a dispensation from Rome for her to see me. But in the nick of time my constitution took a hand and I began to mend.

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Out of this inhuman consequence of a law meant only for the protection of the monks, the Passionists began building their monasteries with the infirmary, like the reception parlors, outside the formal enclosure, although still part of the over-all building.

During my years of concentration in study of philosophy death in two forms touched our class.

Confrater Maurice was the good if impulsive kind of student, and we were deeply touched when he developed a malignant tuberculosis, from which he soon died. It seemed to us some sort of compensation for the cutting short of a good life that his death was peaceful, surrounded by all the monks bearing lighted candles and reciting the litany and prayers for the dying. Always the sight of death had stirred me strongly, and it did so especially now, in the presence of this moving spectacle.

But a little later another kind of death, which affected me much more than the physical passing away of Maurice, occurred in our very midst.

One morning Father Stanislaus called us together. "Confrater Luke is no longer with us," he said thoughtfully.

We were very much startled. What could it mean? So far as we knew, Luke had no sickness.

The meaning became all too clear as Father Stanislaus followed up his disturbing statement with a homily on the danger of losing one's vocation, to us the most precious thing in the world. "You must look to your faith and perseverance in the fulfillment of the obligations you have voluntarily taken upon yourselves," he said sadly. "Many forces wait only too eagerly to waylay the searcher for the ultimate life of the spirit. Protect yourselves."

He said no more, and, for us, all was shrouded in mys-

tery. We did not know whether Confrater Luke had been expelled or whether he had grown cold in his love for the service of God and left his own accord. I had been fond of Luke, with his blundering, often blustering ways, and his defection, if defection it really was, seemed to sadden me even more than the deaths of Walter and Maurice. Happily they were now enjoying with God the fruits of their sacrifice. But poor Luke, a failure, out in the cold and wicked world—were it not far better that he too should be dead? Although he had had no head for philosophy and mathematics, he was a near genius when it came to mechanical things. I recalled his constructing for our physics laboratory a frictional machine complete with glass disk, cushions, cylinders, and so on, for the generating of electricity. But now he was a lost soul. Could he ever become a useful member of society, a respected citizen in the world?

His name was never mentioned in the monastery among us again.

Notwithstanding the intervention of these unhappy events, those student years in the monastery at Normandy were especially happy ones for me. I was deeply stimulated by the study of philosophy. The speculations of man concerning the ultimate nature of existence laid fascinating hold on me. Of course, one hardly learns the terms in two years or becomes acquainted with the many faces of the problem; but such an interval is sufficient for whetting the appetite, and life can no longer be taken for granted.

As our lector, Father Alfred, was a brilliant scholar, our lectures were one continual feast. If we had no idea that a Spanish-American war was taking place, we

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were nevertheless kept abreast of what modern thinkers were writing on the age-old problem of human existence. Over and over we fought all the epochal battles of the mind in the past, and the war of the Universals on the nature and validity of cognition was to me the most thrilling of them all. I was never to be immune again to excitement over the jousts of the nominalists and the realists—the eternal veterans' enjoyment of reliving battles fought on another day!

At the end of the second year of philosophy we had the grand examination, conducted by two of the leading philosophers of the American Province, Father Joseph and Father Philip, old war horses both. The examination was held in the presence of the provincial and his two consultors.

This followed the custom in the order whereby at the end of each school year the provincial superior appointed two monks from another monastery—men generally noted for their advanced knowledge of subjects in question—to examine and report on progress made during the year. It meant an ordeal for both the students and their professors, but it enabled the higher superiors to keep informed of the standard of ability and industry of the one and the other.

Our grand examination had special significance, for on its outcome depended the selection of two students to be sent to the International College in Rome, a new project just initiated to raise even higher the standard of education within the order. I can't recall whether we knew specifically what depended on this examination, but the ordeal was severe nevertheless, because of the formidable array of examiners and the presence of the higher superiors.

Beforehand I put in days of excruciating worry and pessimism, a natural habit with me. But when the great day came, I was, also according to habit, calm and self-possessed and thoroughly alert. The spiritual pattern of life did not prevent my being sufficiently wily and cunning to realize that both the old men were sticklers for orthodox, Scholastic views, so I did not try to show off with perhaps more brilliant but less conservative and trusted modern vagaries, but gave them the straight approved theories, proving them with the time-frayed but honored arguments. I felt that I did myself proud when I answered their objections in a particular case by making a subtle distinction upon which the whole force and value of the argument depended. All nervousness had burned off in the fire of mental activity and challenge produced by the questioners and their shrewdly selected questions, and as I took my seat, enough of Satan resided in me to preen my vanity at having done well.

A few days later we were given the astounding news that Confrater Celestine and I had been chosen to go to Rome. It seemed to me that this was not entirely as it should have been, for, though brilliant and quick in mind, Celestine lacked the depth of another student, Pancratius, who was possessed of a more philosophic mind and a broader grasp of the subject than either of us. But Pancratius was a slow, plodding country boy, who could never seem to show at his best in public. Besides that, he was rather independent in thought, often leaning toward the novel rather than the traditional view; and of course orthodoxy is a supreme virtue of the Church.

Secretly I thought another factor had influenced the provincial in his choice, and it was this:

The provincial was one of the Italian fathers who had

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come over from Rome in 1852 at the petition of Bishop O'Connor to found in his diocese, which was Pittsburgh, the Passionist Congregation in this country. His name was Father Giovanni, and he was especially revered for his connection with the beginnings of the order's early days in the United States.

It chanced that our grand examination came in what was a jubilee of some sort with him; perhaps fifty years from his profession, or his ordination. The monastery was to celebrate this event after the grand examination, and I had been commissioned by our director to write an address on behalf of the students.

I wrote a heartfelt eulogy of Father Giovanni, referring to him lovingly as the last link binding us to the order in Rome, and through Rome to the first founder of the order, St. Paul of the Cross. (Later on, my carefully arranged words were to be referred to by my less fortunate and momentarily irreverent brother students as Ildefonso's missing-link theory!)

It was a well-written address, full of a young monk's fervor and love of his order. Father Celestine, as the best speaker in the class, was chosen to deliver it, at the celebration in which the whole monastery assisted. All were greatly touched, none more so than old Padre Giovanni himself, who wept as the early days were recalled. Our sincere gratitude and affectionate congratulations were poured forth eloquently by Confrater Celestine.

Padre Giovanni learned from the director that I was author of the address, and next day it was announced that Celestine and I were chosen to go to Rome. So I felt that the provincial had been swayed by his emotions as well as by the report of the examiners.

The Irish in me told me I should be elated. Perhaps the stolidity in my nature inherited from my Pennsyl-

vania Dutch ancestors kept me from being in the least so at the prospect of going to Rome. I understood perfectly that it was a great privilege, being chosen as one of two representatives of America to spend four years studying theology at the mother house of the order and at the very fountainhead of the Church. I knew too that many would have been overjoyed at the mere prospect of seeing Europe, of visiting the churches and holy places of Italy, not to speak of the works of art and the monuments of history.

But somehow my pleasure at the prospect was mingled with a sense of my unworthiness and a feeling of inferiority which convinced me that I could not succeed in a university composed of the best intellects literally from all over the world. This feeling of inferiority had dogged me whenever heavy responsibilities were placed on my shoulders and was to do so whenever I was appointed or elected to offices that seemed to me beyond my capacities. It was an echo of childhood shyness, stemming from the impediment in my speech, which, paradoxically enough, had almost ceased to exist. It was to take years of succeeding where I had been sure of failing, however, before any feeling of confidence in myself was built up.

Of course, our companions looked on Celestine and me with a kindly envy. But the emotions of my parents were certainly not of unalloyed joy. On the one hand they were happy and proud that I had been so signally honored, and perhaps they realized even more than I what this step could mean in my future career. But they were growing old and there was a poignant question in their minds. Would they ever see me again?

Once more Father Stanislaus's deep Irish sensibility and sympathy came to the surface. He sensed what the separation would mean, especially to my mother, and,

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against the custom of the order, he permitted me to have my photograph taken, with my older brother, Joseph, but recently ordained a secular priest in the diocese of St. Louis. Through her tears my mother smiled at that.

VII

We sailed in September 1899 on a ship of the Prince Line bound for Naples. We were in the care of Padre Giovanni, who was being given the trip to his old Italy to celebrate his jubilee, and Father Peter, who had first received me in the order and who, too, was being allowed to visit Rome as a reward for many years of faithful service.

It had been five years since Celestine and I had “left the world,” and, feeling unaccustomed to its ways and very awkward, we kept mostly to ourselves and shrank from mingling with the passengers.

A child of eight or nine threw me into enormous embarrassment by romping up to me on deck and remarking gaily: “I like you; you are a square man.” Not having the least idea how to behave in the awesome presence of a rollicking child, I stammeringly asked what he meant by a “square man.” “Oh, you see, all people are either round or square, and I just like the square ones.” I marveled at such a simple criterion for human relations.

Celestine and I were dressed as secular priests, wearing the Roman collar. Much to our relief, as we were mostly seen on deck reading our breviaries, we were drawn very little into casual conversation. And, having spent all our lives far inland, we were captivated by the ocean voyage.

We had some inkling of the differences between American and European customs when we made our first stop at Fayal or São Miguel in the Azores. And after



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fifteen days we sailed into the Bay of Naples, which was as smooth as a millpond.

The hubbub and confusion that surrounded us on landing was appalling to us monks. We gaped at milling people shouting raucously back and forth in all the tongues of the earth. It puzzled us that no one seemed to heed anything that was screamed at them. Attendants, porters, cabbies shook their fists at one another and quarreled over passengers and their luggage, more than once seizing the passengers and pulling them every which way. We finally pieced together the deduction that a boatload of *Americani*, fabulously rich and reckless spenders, was a bonanza of such importance that the law and order embodied in a handful of gendarmes was only something to be pushed to one side.

I do not know how matters would have ended for Celestine and me in our ludicrous innocence of such situations had not Padre Giovanni, being a veteran traveler, been able and willing to give back to the banditti in their own language as good as they gave. We had one final and spectacular exhibit of fireworks when, after tiring of so much roaring, he summoned the concierge of the hotel to settle the cabby's bill—at one fifth the charge that was sworn to be the very least on which a good and honest cabman could maintain his wife and starving children.'

The fact that Padre Giovanni was with us enabled us to spend a few days in Naples to see the sights. To young Americans who had never been more than a little distance from home in the Midwest, Naples was like a city on another planet. Such a *mélange*! Mothers casually nursing their young on the streets . . . children naked at their play . . . cows and goats stopped at any door to be milked according to the needs of the customer

. . . the beggars, the dirt, the noise. But round the next corner a gem of Old World architecture, in a museum a painting of most exquisite beauty, a view of the harbor at which one could only stare in wonder.

It was not long before even Celestine and I caught on to the fact that the violent language and wild gesticulations of the natives under our very noses did not necessarily mean anything more than a friendly passing of the time of day. And yet we fell into the habit of picking out the reassuring figure of a gendarme in every crowded place.

The crowning experience of the stay in Naples was the visit to the beautiful old church and monastery of San Martino, on an eminence overlooking Naples and the bay. We stood on the hill, and there rose to us a sound as of a colossal beehive, made by the endless recitative of myriads of human voices far below in the town. In the distance a thin plume of smoke drifted from the crater of Vesuvius. And Capri and Ischia and the other islands reached out along the face of the ocean like sculptured fingers, beautifully jeweled. . . .

But then our divertissement was over and we took train for Rome. Rome, the great gem in the diadem of the world, the Eternal City, rich with the memorabilia of so much history of the human race! That golden place of pilgrimage for all Catholics, city of churches, scene of the struggles of the early martyrs, the see of Peter and his sublime successors. Here were the Pantheon, the Catacombs, all the treasury of art and antiquity. This lay before two young monks from America, and our souls soared with wonder and humility.

We arrived at the mother house of the order, the centuries-old Monastery of Saints John and Paul on the

Cælian Hill overlooking the Colosseum. We were awed by the beauty of the fourteenth-century Lombard campanile guarding the entrance. It hardly seemed possible that we would be able to spend many tomorrows under the influence of all the things that are Rome.

We were made welcome with great warmth by the whole community, headed by the venerable General of the order, Padre Bernardo, that white-haired saint, full of such paternal kindness and divine simplicity that it made us feel all the more small and insignificant. We perceived almost at once that the legend of the Americani—their wonderful achievements, their fabulous energy and wealth, their unpredictable doings—had penetrated even these monastic walls and that even we were looked on as specimens from a land surely as strange as Mars.

After a genial reception and the traditional embrace with a kiss on either cheek, bestowed on us beginning with the General down to the very last lay brother, and then a light refreshment of *liqueur du pays* and cookies, that all might join in celebrating our arrival, Celestine and I were turned over to the care of the director of the new International College, Father Ireneo.

Some of our troubles did not wait long to begin. Neither Celestine nor I could speak Italian. We had been selected so suddenly to depart from our monastery that we had had no time for even the most sketchy preparation to speak the language. True, we had begun anxiously to study it aboard ship, but with indifferent success. So for several weeks our sole means of communication was Latin. A dead language is at best a poor vehicle for ordinary human interchange, however perfect it may be for the teaching and study of philosophical subjects, where an exact vocabulary of terms has been built up almost like mathematical symbols. But for everyday use,

adding the fact that each nationality has its own pronunciation and, worse still, its own tonal inflections, often making words sound, to me at least, more like Chinese than Latin, we did not find it altogether satisfactory. In all fairness, we felt sure that to the descendants of the Romans our American accents must sound like a blasphemous caricature of the noble language of their ancestors.

We had another hardship in the cold. In the climate of America our monasteries were steam-heated and comfortably warm. In Italy monasteries were unheated, the only exception being that in the recreation room of the professed (the priests and lay brothers) during the recreation hours there was a brazier filled with burning charcoal, so that on cold days the older monks could gather round and warm their hands. And in Rome it can get very cold!

The monastery was hundreds of years old. The ceilings were rough, whitewashed beams, and the floors of well-worn bricks, a joy to the antiquarian, a trial to monks. We had no electricity, and the house was dimly lighted by small *bugias* burning olive oil and placed along the winding corridors. To read the office in choir we had kerosene lamps behind the lecterns.

Although each student had his own cell and did his studying there, he had no light of any sort; so to study on winter mornings before the sun rose we gathered around a huge, square table lighted by a single lamp suspended overhead. The cold was often intense. There wasn't much to be done about our bare sandaled feet on the cold brick floor, but we bundled our bodies up as best we could, wrapping our mantles tight about us and putting our hands in our sleeves to keep as warm as possible. We developed some slight aid by turning the pages of books with our noses to avoid unbundling ourselves

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and dissipating some of the heat so carefully stored up! The cold became a real test of spirituality when we rose shortly after midnight to go to the choir for an hour and a half to chant the office and make mental prayer. The first shock, of slipping our feet into sandals icy from standing beside our pallets on the brick floor, was the worst. American ingenuity finally came to my rescue; I decided to put my sandals under the blanket so that when the rattle sounded for Matins, they would be warm. Alas, what I gained in comfort of body I speedily lost in peace of soul, for I felt heartily ashamed of my softness and lack of mortification and thrust the trick from me.

We were apprised of a custom followed by the Italian monks that was quite strange to us; it was that of wearing old-fashioned nightcaps in bed. One was placed in each cell. Not knowing its exact purpose, for some time I didn't put mine on; but in some way the director found out and took the trouble to inform me that it was a monastery custom and I should not hesitate to follow it. The monks are religiously scrupulous about keeping up the old customs handed down from the beginning, often even after the reasons for them cease to exist.

The first night I wore the thing, which looked to me very like a dunce cap, I forgot when awakened for Matins that I had it on. Hurrying in a daze of sleep into belt, sandals, and mantle, I hastened to the choir. As I genuflected before the middle altar I heard a suppressed snicker. Not realizing that I was the cause of it, I turned toward the assembled monks and, as is the custom, made a profound bow, first to the left, then to the right, before innocently proceeding to my place in the stalls. The tittering grew more general and I sensed that something was much amiss. But not until our director came over to me and pointed to my head did I realize the grotesque

figure I made. For many a day the monastery was amused by the episode—the American wearing his nightcap to choir!

Another custom new to us was that of drinking wine at meals, for in America the students all drank milk. In Rome each monk had a bottle containing about a pint of wine set at his place in the refectory. At our first meal in Rome neither Celestine nor I drank any of the wine. After the meal our director informed us that it was the custom for the monks to take wine with their meals, and that if we wanted to mortify ourselves we could leave a finger of wine, in the bottle, but not more, as wine was very essential to one's health in Italy, where milk was food considered fit only for babies. The good director, not being able to imagine anyone who would not like wine, thought we had refrained from drinking ours out of a desire to deny ourselves a pleasure. That evening—it was a fast day, and only the lightest of suppers was served—Celestine and I obediently drank our wine, including the last finger!

As the community was large and some of the older brethren had no teeth and so were slow in eating, meals generally lasted well over the prescribed half hour. I finished my meal quickly, however, cleaned my knife and wooden fork and spoon on a piece of bread, rolled them up in my napkin, and put them on a little shelf under the table at my place. Then, waiting for the older monks to finish, I sat back and meditated, as was usual on fast nights, when there was no reading in the refectory.

I felt amazed at the richness and abundance of my thoughts. A glow of happiness and good feeling spread over me, seldom experienced even in choir. It never occurred to me to attribute this inrush of fervor to the wine—until later, when I compared notes with Celes-

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tine. He, being a shade more worldly wise than I, realized that he was at that state of exaltation which precedes slight intoxication and, to be on the safe side, on the way from the refectory to the chapel where we made our thanksgiving, picked out a special row of bricks to follow in the pavement, to make sure of walking straight!

In a rather short time we became acclimated to the customary beverage of Italy and could drink our allotted share with the most experienced.

October is the monastic vacation month, that thirty-day holiday from study that the Passionist student is given each year. It coincides with the Italian vacation month *par excellence*.

As Celestine and I had arrived before the middle of October, we had two or three weeks before the beginning of classes, which we were permitted to spend in getting acquainted with our new surroundings and with the new students as they arrived from different parts of the world. And we visited the great Roman points of interest.

I remember well my first visit to St. Peter's and how disappointed I was. I don't know what I expected, but it did not come up at all to my expectations. The trouble evidently was with me; either I couldn't take in its greatness because it was so great, or it was that my imagination had pictured it other than it really was. Of course its grandeur and beauty were to grow on me. More every time I visited it the size and splendor of the great basilica took hold of my imagination and feeling for beauty.

To be seen at its best, I think one must see St. Peter's, not as an object of curiosity, but in process of being used for the purpose for which it was created, as a temple and setting for the grandioso ceremonies of worship. Shortly after our arrival in Rome we were to view it in this rela-

tion. The year 1900 was declared a Holy Year, during which all the faithful were invited to come to Rome from the far corners of the earth, and special privileges and indulgences were granted to Catholics everywhere.

By exactly the same ceremony as that which initiated the *anno santo* six hundred years earlier, Pope Leo XIII would arrive to open the blocked-up holy door. Chanting the versicle: "Open unto me the gates of justice," he would knock three times with a small hammer of silver. According to preparation, the last fragments of masonry would fall at the third blow, and when the threshold had been swept clean by jubilee penitents, the Holy Father would open the door, to begin the wonderful and solemn rites.

When the great day arrived, there were an estimated fifty thousand persons present, yet only the nave of St. Peter's was filled, surely leaving empty as much room again in the church. The present church, built in the hundred and twenty years between 1506, when the architect Bramante delivered his finished plans and blue-prints, and 1626, when it was dedicated by Urban VIII, is the largest Christian church in the world. It is no wonder that it would take me time to comprehend and appreciate the basilica of St. Peter's, begun by Bramante, supervised for a while by Raphael, its matchless dome perhaps the greatest achievement of Michelangelo.

The suspense I felt, waiting to lay eyes for the first time on Leo XIII, Vicar of Christ, Successor of the Prince of Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Province of Rome, was almost beyond endurance. A wide lane down the middle of the great nave was kept free, lined on either side by the Swiss Guards in their full dress of armor, plumed

helmet, and staff, even more picturesque than their formal attire, the uniform in red, yellow, and blue, the Medici colors, introduced by a Medici pope and designed for him by Raphael.

Suddenly the commanding tones of silver trumpets rang forth. A murmuring, like surf at the rim of the sea, arose from the expectant multitude. In the far distance sounded the cries and huzzahs of the people out in the great square: "Viva il Papa! Viva il Papa!" The Pope is the Pope in English; the word is a title. In Italian, or French, the pontiff is father, papa, or pape.

An eighth of a mile away, at the entrance, I could make out a small white figure raised above the heads of the devout crowd. The Holy Father was entering the basilica.

The head of the long procession passed us in resplendent march, a pageant to be seen nowhere else on earth. Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and mitred abbots, Vatican chamberlains and monsignori of the Papal Household, generals and procurators of the many monastic and religious orders, nobles and diplomats passed along. The cardinals, at the head of the procession, carried the cross and tiaras, symbols of the Pope's authority and position. And a very galaxy of venerable prelates was robed in all the hues and variations of the spectrum, red, purple, gold, blue. . . . I felt breathless with awe.

And now came the Holy Father, carried in the *sedia gestatoria* by the *bussolanti*—dressed in rose-red damask and presided over by a dean of *sediari*—borne high above our heads. All eyes were fixed in reverence on the white-robed figure.

Over ninety years of age, the venerable Leo XIII looked to my awestruck gaze like a transparently delicate image carved in ivory, except that with a wonderful and fatherly

concern for his children he half rose at intervals and turned from side to side, bestowing his blessing on all.

"*Viva il papa! Viva il papa Re!*" the cry rose on all sides. Next to me in the great press a giant Franciscan friar roared his evvivas with such a transport of feeling that he caught the ear of the Holy Father, who turned his direct gaze on us as he passed. It seemed to me a look as from another world, overflowing with paternal love, and solicitude and blessing. Hitherto I had been thrilled immeasurably by the whole pageant, carried away by my own enthusiasm, mingling with that of the tens of thousands of human beings all about me. But for me the climax was that direct glance from the eyes of the saintlike, white-robed figure on his crimson throne. It seemed as though the very center of my being were riven, my soul transported by a rapturous ecstasy of emotion to a pinnacle of feeling such as I had not known a human being could experience and survive. Tears flowed unhindered down my cheeks. Later I could not remember the rest of the ceremony or how I got out of the immense crowd or walked back to our monastery. Such a pitch of feeling I reached seldom outside of contemplative prayer.

We began the study of dogmatic theology under a father who made up for his lack of brilliance by his goodwill and orthodoxy. He had fat rosy cheeks and a habit during his Latin lectures of making an Italian expression into one word: *Quellalichecistalacosa*. Very occasionally he would seem to have the idea that he must force himself to say the words separately: *Quella li che ci sta*. . . . I suppose it impressed me because the Italian was new to me. Though the words put together meant nothing, each had—at least for the padre—its own meaning. He used his fabricated word rather as, fishing for a suitable word,

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an American might use *thingumabob*, which would surely strike a beginner in English as strange, much as the padre's frequent interpolations of *Quellalichecistalacosa* struck me, a beginner in Italian.

I soon learned that I might have spared myself my fears about meeting keenness of competition, for Celestine and I turned out to be, with one Italian confrater, easily the best students in the class, though perhaps not the most articulate.

Our lector had one great weakness, that of wandering away from the subject in hand into paths of anecdote, dropping abruptly from Latin into Italian. We noticed a tendency in the Italian students to play up to this weakness, by leading questions that were certain to launch the lector on a story that could reasonably be expected to last at least a quarter of an hour. Often this was sufficient to change the class into a conversational free-for-all. Then, like a man finding with disgust that he has carelessly gone down a road other than the one intended, the padre would lunge back to the subject of his lecture, with a grim and defensive glower at those in the class who were foreigners, proof that he knew he had strayed from the high standard expected of the college. But I enjoyed the study of theology, though perhaps not so much as that of philosophy, and, notwithstanding some lack of professorial stimulation, I made progress in it.

As we grew accustomed to Rome we gradually varied our study with associations and activities that broadened our lines to the order and to the pattern of the Church.

Padre Giovanni (not our American superior of that name but one of the general consultors) was a joy for us to visit. He was a white-haired monk, with the bland and innocent countenance of a baby. Eternity did not contain time enough in which to do the work he had

laid out for himself, and he had no time for superficial niceties.

His table and chairs were piled with leaning towers of manuscript, open books, and the like in seeming chaos, and there was only a microscopic space in the center of his cell where visitors might stand if they felt obliged to interrupt him. Everything was covered with dust, but if one presumed to move an item so much as an inch, the expression he used for swearing would ring out: "*Servo di Dio!*" he would shout. "Now if you upset my cell I'll never be able to find anything again!"

How the huge piles of books and manuscripts remained in place was one of the mysteries of the monastery. But, for all we were disturbers of his peace, we got to know him well, and it was a delight to draw him out. The quickest way was to ask him if he had happened to hear yet of some newfangled idea in philosophy or theology. Of course he had, for he read everything; but he was a stickler for the old customs and a sworn enemy of any and all innovations. "*Servo di Dio!*" ("Servant of God!") he would shout when the subject of some new heresy or custom was brought up. He would shake his trembling old finger at us as if we were the real culprits and berate us with apostolic zeal. Had he chosen to be a sailor instead of a monk, I am sure he would have been the pride of his ship, judging from the pungent meaning he managed to inject into his beloved *Servo di Dio!*

The Italian students used to get their fun with him by using some foreignism or modern word. To Padre Giovanni the purity of the old Italian was infinitely more to be desired than rubies, and he hated new words as he would hate Satan himself. Cesari, with his quaint old language, was Padre Giovanni's favorite author, and Manzoni, the modern idol, his nightmare.

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It would be questionable to say that his immense love of perfection was a fault, but the Italian proverb “*L'ottimo e il nemico del bene*” (“The best is the enemy of the good”) was embodied in him; he could not progress—that is to say, beyond becoming a saint!—because nothing could come up to his lofty standard of excellence. Hence the multitude of unfinished manuscripts, most of them yellow with age, lying around his cell.

Another character we liked to visit was old Padre Martino. He too never accomplished anything, but for a rather different reason. He was scrupulous almost to the point of insanity. At almost any time of the day or night he could be seen rushing through the corridors in search of his confessor, or indeed of any priest, to shrive him. He furnished both amusement and gentle pity for the community. Walking along the corridors, chanting the office in choir, Padre Martino could be seen making horns—that is to say, shaking his closed fist with index and little fingers outstretched, in a stabbing motion—at the Devil to drive him off. During mental prayer we would often hear him break out in imprecations at the Evil One. No confessor was ever able to relieve him of this excess of scrupulosity, which rendered him useless as a priest except to say Mass, and even then the server would be sent off posthaste for a brother priest to absolve him before he could go on with the celebration.

Our greatest joy, of course, was to visit the General, Padre Bernardo. He was able to accomplish so much during his long life of holy living because he was endowed with uncommon wisdom and a compassionate understanding of human nature, plus an overflowing sense of humor. To live in the same monastery and have the example of his holiness ever before us was a blessing in-

deed. Even in later years, when his tall, thin figure was so bent that he could only with difficulty raise his head to see you, he yielded to no one in exact observance of the rule. Though preoccupied with the affairs of the whole order, he never missed being the first in choir at the hour of office or prayer; and even at the midnight service, which remains always a severe ordeal for human nature of whatever age, he was inevitably present.

His long face, with fine aristocratic features; his deep-set eyes, his long, flowing white hair, and that something added which the soul may give to a countenance, some aura of sanctity, would, I often thought when with him, make a perfect model for a Raphael seeking to create a simple, Christlike man. The beauty of God shone in the face of Padre Bernardo.

During those happy Roman years the class as a body visited on its weekly walks a church or a museum or gallery. In that way our free afternoons never wanted for an objective.

Certain kinds of beauty had been born in me through my parents, though they were not the beauty of great painting and architecture. But there in Rome as a student, from knowing nothing of art, I came to have a profound and moving love for beauty in painting, sculpture, and architecture by mere proximity to the creations of the masters and drinking them in, although for some reason the cold beauty of sculpture never made the place for itself in my heart that the other two forms did.

It would be wearisome to trace the growth of my education in the appreciation of art. Nevertheless, the fact of it may suggest to civic leaders and public-spirited individuals of wealth how the contact with good art will move the spirit and mind of those without technical training, and especially of youth. To place masterpieces, flowing

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into our country from Europe, at the disposal of all is a sure means of raising the standard of art appreciation, with pleasure and benefit to all. The radio has been the means of developing public appreciation of music and who can estimate the effect of television in the future, in bringing the achievements of differing cultures within the appreciative grasp of all?

I was to witness two other ceremonials in St. Peter's that were never to be forgotten:

Leo XIII had passed from the earthly see, Pius X was elected his successor, and the occasion came for the beatification of Joan of Arc. Forty thousand French Catholics were present to honor their beloved martyred maid, and in the long interlude of waiting for the coming of the papal procession they sang their folksongs with a fervor and *élan* that would have stirred the stoniest of even non-Catholic hearts. For weeks afterward the simple and exquisite refrain: "*Au ciel, au ciel, au ciel!*" rang in my ears and spirit.

The enthusiasm of the emotional French reached a tremendous pitch at the approach of the Holy Father. But for me the climax of the event came in a simple, loving gesture of the saintly Pope on his journey back along the nave after the ceremony was concluded. As he was carried by, with an impulsive gesture he reached out and, catching a fold of the French flag in his hand, kissed it.

For a moment the faithful were stunned, at the spontaneity, the beauty and love, the unexpectedness of the gesture. Then there burst forth, as from all persons become one, a mighty shout of reverent delight, which echoed and re-echoed around the lofty vaulting of the basilica. Such a sound of distilled human emotion—patriotism, gratitude, love, devotion, surrender—raised

to the highest pitch by the humble act of a saintly old man, defies description in words. One felt the presence of a gigantic superhuman power, as wave after wave of passionate emotion swept the multitude. No Frenchman present could ever forget the evidence of his senses. Nor can I.

It is on occasions such as these that St. Peter's is seen at its best. No other structure in the world could fittingly house such scenes. The very massiveness of the structure, the loftiness of the vaulting, the sublime grace of the great dome, seem to become part of the stately pageants enacted within its precincts. This could not be true, I feel, of a temple of pure classical architecture, for instance like St. Paul's Outside the Walls. The medieval and Renaissance costumes, the robes and ceremonial accouterments blazing with gold and jewels, the lights and color and warmth of decoration, would be out of place in *San Paolo fuori le Mura*, with its cold and chaste severity of line. A monastic service, say of the Benedictine Order, with its solemn, subdued, rhythmic Gregorian chant and unadorned ritual of Matins or Vespers, is more in the feeling of such classic settings.

As I came to be more informed in art matters, it seemed to me that perhaps if function is a criterion in architecture, then St. Peter's does not deserve all the unfavorable comment of its critics, who have tended to view it rather as an empty building, not as forming the setting for a Renaissance ceremonial, so filled with warmth and color that a little of even the baroque does not seem really amiss.

Will not the critics pardon me, standing up almost alone for a temple where I have experienced such very deep and varied emotions? Let the Greeks or the Teutons

have their classic temples for the chaste rites to their gods. Let me have St. Peter's, with all its architectural faults, for the medieval pageantry of a Catholic Mass for the fiery race of Italians. Should not St. Peter's, a great temple in its place and in its function, be judged when in use for the purpose of its creators, rather than as an abstract specimen of the art of architecture?

The other experience, which never failed to thrill me as though I were seeing it for the first time, was the solemn Papal Mass, celebrated in St. Peter's. The majestic processional, the ordered, stately ritual at the altar, the reverberating music of the great organ, the heavenly singing of the *Gloria* and *Credo* by hundreds of trained voices calling to each other from dome and gallery until at last the hush, and then the soft, musical voice of the celebrant begins that most simple and beautiful of musical creations, the Preface, the call to the whole angelic host to assist at the divine Sacrifice about to take place—these are the cumulative effects sustained by the emotions. A sound like a sigh steals through the great edifice as all kneel while the “*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus!*” is sung, excepting only the brilliantly uniformed Noble Guards, who stand in a great semicircle around the altar.

Again there is silence. Only the murmur of the celebrant is heard as he approaches the sacred moment. A final instant of intense awe and suspense comes as the time of Consecration arrives, broken suddenly by a sound like no music ever written, the swish of steel on steel when the Noble Guards draw as one man, unsheathing swords from scabbards, holding them at present, then bowing profoundly and holding them at arm's length, to touch the tips to the stone floor.

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Amid the profound silence the pontiff, bending to the altar and holding the Host in his hands, pronounces, slowly and distinctly, the sacred words: "Hoc est enim Corpus Meum. For this is My Body."

Then, shattering the awesome silence, the silver trumpets sound their piercingly beautiful notes.

VIII

For a diversity of reasons we were proposed for ordination earlier in Italy than we should have been at home. As we were in Rome, it was relatively easier to obtain the necessary dispensations from canonical requirements for years of study. Now and then tourists in Italy are heard to remark on an apparent lack of respect for holy things, but the fact is that, with Italians, faith and Church are not a Sunday affair, but so much a part of their daily lives that they simply feel at home in the church, not abashed or overawed into surface expressions of reverence in their Father's house.

The main reason for advancing our ordination to the priesthood, however, was connected with matters of economy in our monastery. A moderate stipend derives from the faithful for the celebration of Mass. In Italy at that time the recognized stipend was from one to two lire, whereas in America the stipend was one dollar. This offering was earmarked to take care of the material needs of the priest for a day, differing, therefore, according to the standard of living in the various countries. The building and upkeep of the churches and the other expenses of a parish were financed by collections and larger donations from the more affluent members of the church.

The monasteries in America usually had more stipends for Masses than they could take care of. The excess was sent to the General at Rome, who distributed them to

the poorer monasteries throughout Italy. Naturally these fat stipends for a *Massa Americana* were much sought after by the rectors of the Italian communities, who often had great difficulty in raising the funds necessary to feed and clothe their monks.

Now, a student in the community is, for an interval, a species of deadhead. He consumes but does not produce. The rector of the Monastery of Sts. John and Paul had the great burden of financing the keep of sixty or seventy monks.

The rector at the time Celestine and I were students there was what we Americans would call a hustler, a go-getter. He was built along the lines of a Friar Tuck, wide in girth, full of countenance, something of a genial surprise among Passionists, with their uncommon austerity of living. He it was who brought pressure to bear on the General to have us ordained after two years of theological study instead of the minimum of three years and four months prescribed by canon law before a candidate can be raised to the priesthood. He urged the General to obtain a dispensation from the Pope forthwith.

Padre Gioachino, for that was his name, was able to prevail. The dispensation was got on the plea of economic necessity. Celestine and I had already received the first two major orders, subdiaconate and diaconate, and now began our intensive preparation for the priesthood.

Although our whole life of prayer was of course a preparation, we made a special retreat of ten days, and a general confession covering our whole lives, to purify ourselves still further for the crowning event of the long years of training. We had also to master the rubrics of the Mass and the ceremonial laws governing its celebration. Daily we said a "straw Mass"—that is to say, went

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through all the gestures and ceremonies, saying all the words with the exception of the climactic words of consecration.

In long hours with our director, and by reading special books on the subject, the holiness, the responsibilities and obligations of the priesthood were engraved on our minds and spirits. It needed profound humility to comprehend that we were to become direct representatives of Christ and handlers of holy things. The words of Jesus to the Apostles were handed on to us, their successors, and we read them again in the light of the step we were about to take and became filled with the desire to become worthy priests, an *alter Christus*. My inward experience and preparation were the same, I am sure, in greater or less degree according to temperament, as those of practically every young man who aspires to the priesthood. To have this high ambition, to strive for its exalted ideal, is great and ennobling.

And so, in the third week of September 1901, I was ordained priest in St. John Lateran, the Cathedral Church of Rome, the first ranking church in the world. The ordination services took place during the course of a Pontifical Mass, at which the celebrant was Cardinal Respigli, the Pope's Vicar General, whose responsibility it was to perform all the regular duties of the Bishop of Rome while the Pope was engrossed in the affairs of the Universal Church. I was one of seventy-seven candidates, students from all the different national colleges and from the many seminaries and monasteries in Rome.

We lay prone, row after row, before the altar. In the pregnant quiet, punctuated only by the shadowy sound made by the passing to bless and anoint our hands with holy oil and chrism, the binding together of the palms,

gravely and wonderfully the question and answer of the first lesson in the catechism stole across my mind:

“Q: Why did God make you?

“A: God made me to know Him, to love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.”

The sacred words of ordination were repeated over each of us in turn: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost . . .” and when it had been said: “Thou art a priest forever . . .” we became co-celebrants in the continuation of the Mass, each having the guidance of an assistant priest on his left hand. Word by word, aloud, we read the rest of the Mass with the Cardinal. This was really my first Mass, as in trepidation and awe I pronounced with my brethren the sacred words that I firmly believed changed the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

“Thou art a priest forever.” It was the supreme moment of my life. I felt great things happening in my soul. However solemn and awesome in itself, the external ceremony was but a symbol of the real and inward events. After this experience no priest could take lightly the office and obligations placed upon him on the day of his ordination. At times he might fail, true; but always the memory of that day would be with him, like the memory of his mother, sacred and divine.

The ceremonies lasted perhaps five hours. Yet so buoyed up were we by our emotions that, though we had had no food whatever since the preceding day, we felt no sense of exhaustion.

We were received back at the monastery with demonstrations of great joy, each monk kneeling before us, kissing the palms of our newly consecrated hands, and asking

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our blessing. It was touching and even embarrassing to see the older monks, and especially Padre Bernardo, thus humbling themselves before young and inexperienced priests.

The rest of the day I spent as in an unreal world, awaiting celebration on the morrow of what is formally called the priest's First Mass. It is the day of days for the Catholic mother, to assist at the first Mass of her son at God's altar. Alas, my parents could not journey so far, but I felt that they were made happy on that day, being with me in spirit.

The event started three happy years for me, when I could say my daily Mass as a student, without any of the other obligations of the priesthood, such as hearing confessions, and preaching. And, incidentally, earning my keep!

Continuing our post-ordination study, we had the great good fortune of having Padre Luigi as our professor of moral theology. This is a thorny and delicate subject for everyone, but especially so for monks, who, lacking contact with the world, must nevertheless learn all about the nature and degree of sin of every description. The treatises dealing with sex and marriage were the most embarrassing, to professor and student alike, but our very ignorance and the weight of future responsibility made it all the more essential that we explore the subject thoroughly.

The days when knowledge of sex would become almost a commonplace were far in the future, and there were disturbing instances where, in their enthusiasm and their ignorance, priests in the confessional unintentionally condemned women to lives of suffering or even to death,

from lack of a thorough mastery of the law of the Church, or of judgment in the application of the law in individual cases.

A most fervent priest told me of a woman penitent who sought his counsel after her doctor had assured her that if she had another child she would surely die. In his zeal he told her that doctors did not know everything, and advised her to do her wifely duty, trusting in God. The sad sequel of his earnestly meant but ignorant advice was a double funeral months later. The priest was overwhelmed with remorse not yet to have comprehended the Church's only right remedy, complete abstinence, so that he could have explained it to the penitent instead of having practically forced upon her an obligation that was nonexistent where the matter of sheer survival entered in. The premise of the Church is based fundamentally on the evils of birth-control, and the welfare of the race taking precedence over the convenience of the individual.

The moral theology of the Church is contained in a treatise for priests to study, on the minimum of conduct required, beyond which the law is violated and sin is committed. Thus it is unfair to treat it as though it were a manual of virtue. The Church is often judged incorrectly for what is challenged as her low standard of morality, as found in some texts of moral theology. In point of fact, the Church urges all to the practice of the highest virtue, as will be seen in her ascetic and mystical theologies and in her continual holding up of the life of Christ and the lives of the saints as exemplars to be wholeheartedly followed.

Another thorny subject was that of justice and restitution. The confessor, if he finds the penitent has been guilty of a real injustice, such as slander, stealing, cheating, and so on, is obliged to refuse absolution unless the

culprit promises to make restitution or to right the injury done to another. Nor is the culprit freed from his obligation of restitution by the fact that he does not know whom he has defrauded; as, for instance, a merchant waiting on customers and weighing a heavy thumb on the scales. Since he cannot keep ill-gotten goods, the merchant, to obtain absolution, must give overmeasure for an equal period, and to the best of his judgment in the same amount that he gave short weight; or he must give back to society—to the poor, to charitable institutions—the amount of his peculations.

Many questions in justice and contracts are not so simple as this, and we students had to spend long months studying the methods of business, the nature of contracts, and so on, to be prepared for the multitudinous cases that would be brought before us in the confessional.

Would a discharge by a bankruptcy court be equivalent to absolution from his debts when a man has concealed assets in an assignment? By no means! The concealed assets belong to his creditors and must be given over to them if possible; if that cannot be done without incriminating himself, they must be given to the poor. Judged by the strict standard of moral theology, many of the practices of high finance and business would not pass muster.

During these inspiring and pleasant years in Rome one of my greatest natural enjoyments was the solitary walk of half an hour, twice daily, in the large gardens of the monastery. There were long, shady lanes under the ilexes or holm oaks, whose gnarled spreading branches formed a beautiful canopy. One lane in particular was formed by three rows of these glorious old oaks. The

rows were about twenty feet apart, thus forming a magnificent double avenue hundreds of feet in length. Even the famed Venetian gardens contained nothing more beautiful.

From either end of this walk stretched narrower lanes, lined on either side with high box hedges, leading with many turnings through the garden of figs, almonds, peaches, and other fruit trees, and among fields of broccoli, artichokes, and other vegetables for the monastery table. In all we must have had well over a mile in walks from the monastery door to the distant tall pines, having branches only at the top, like California palm trees.

From among the pines we could feast our eyes on the panorama of Rome before us. Directly below we looked into the Colosseum, eternally magnificent in its ruins. Before us too was the Arch of Constantine and the beginning of the Appian Way; and, a little farther along, the Arch of Titus, and the Roman Forum, with its ruined temples and broken columns. Directly across, in the near foreground on the Palatine Hill, were the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars, and then came the whole city, with its mass of domes and campaniles, the eye coming to rest at last on the crowning glory, the dome of St. Peter's, seeming to gather up all else, pointing the way heavenward.

This was the ideal place in which to meditate on the fleetingness of time and the ephemeral glories of this world. It was a good sight for one who had devoted his life to the Eternal. A perfect peace daily pervaded my soul as I walked meditatively through the monastery gardens.

If one passed another monk in the course of the walk, the biretta was raised in salute to his guardian angel, whom we pictured as walking at his side—the left side,

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the legend said, if he were a priest. Often we encountered cardinals and high dignitaries of the Church, who were not permitted to walk within the walls of Rome and therefore would drive into our garden, in the grand state it was incumbent upon them to maintain, there to walk unmolested amid the peace of the cloister garden. Every week we were sure to meet the great Cardinal Rampolla, who came regularly to Sts. John and Paul to confess to Padre Giovanni and to walk in the garden, either with his confessor or alone.

With the death of Leo XIII came the excitement and suspense of a papal election. The Vatican was a good hour's walk from Santi Giovanni e Paolo, but each afternoon as students we were allowed to go in, to stand in the huge crowd in the Piazza San Pietro to watch the meaningful smoke rise from the chimney leading from the Sistine Chapel, where the conclave was in progress.

The complicated procedure had been described to us by some of the older monks. It appeals to the imagination, and when we stood with the waiting throngs, we felt we could almost follow along its succeeding stages.

Early in the morning of the first day of the conclave the cardinal electors attended a *Missa Solemnis* sung in the Pauline Chapel, the "parish church" of the Vatican, and listened to a sermon, delivered in Latin, emphasizing the solemnity of the conclave and the heavy responsibility lying on the electors of a new pope.

In the afternoon the cardinal electors assembled in the Sistine Chapel and took the oath to safeguard the highest interests of the Church and to keep their judgments free from any and all coercive influences. Then, according to the injunction as phrased by Gregory XV, "with minds free and consciences bare" they repaired to their cells for meditation and prayer.

At eight o'clock in the evening a bell rang mutedly in the San Damasus Courtyard. Inside the conclave, completely immured from the rest of the world, Swiss Guards paced tapestried corridors, crying: "Extra omnes! —All out!" Bearing lighted torches, a committee of three cardinals, led by the Cardinal Camerlengo, provisional head for temporal matters, searched the chapel to make sure no unauthorized persons had for any reason secreted themselves anywhere. Then the cardinal electors entered and took their places in the rows of canopied thrones along either side of the chapel, bathed in the sublime light from the Michelangelo ceiling, with its paintings representing the Creation of the World by God, the Omnipotence of God, and the Will of God, and, behind the altar, the frescoes of the Last Judgment.

When all connections with the outside world were certified as severed, workmen having closed the last passages from the Parrot Courtyard to the Courtyard of San Damasus, three sets of keys on the inside and three more on the outside were turned in their locks.

We knew that if the smoke that ascended after the first ballot had been taken was black and heavy, it would signify that straw had been added to hasten burning of the ballots, hence that no pope had yet been chosen. Each day we hoped for the *fumata*, or streamer of light smoke, which would mean that the election was concluded; and for the appearance of papal attendants on the balcony flinging from the balustrade, to the view of all, the great velvety banner with its blood-red border, showing the papal arms on a field of pure white; our eyes strained to catch a sight of the white-surpliced acolyte bearing a golden cross and followed by the dean of the cardinal deacons, still wearing the violet *croccia* worn

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only for conclaves, who would proclaim: “*Nuntio vobis gaudium magnum; habemus Papam.* I announce to you a great joy; we have a Pope.”

Was the new Pope to be Rampolla? A great many hoped so. Our suspense was almost unbearable.

Finally the moment came! And with it an old man in white, whom a great many could not recognize. In magnificent great tones the proclamation came: “My Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lord, the Lord Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto!” A comparative stranger, Cardinal Sarto had been Patriarch of Venice. With the wonder with which one must ever regard the person of the only absolute sovereign on earth, we gazed at the newly elected Pope. With the dignity of utmost simplicity he stood for a moment clothed in his papal white, surveying the cheering throng as with one voice shouting: “*Viva il Papa! Viva il Papa!*” In the crowd less hysterical voices murmured the eternal verity of the Italian proverb: “The Pope dies, the Pope lives.”

Raising his arm, the new pontiff gave his blessing *urbi et orbi*; then, turning, he retired from view.

Rampolla, a very prince among men, would have been elected had not the Cardinal from Vienna vetoed his election, in the name of the Austrian Emperor. Long had the Church fought this abuse of the old right of veto claimed by Catholic sovereigns in time of the election of a pope. Dramatically enough, the first official act after his election as the new pontiff—who chose the name Pius X—was to pronounce sentence of ex-communication against anyone, sovereign or cardinal, who dared again to interfere with the freedom of election of a pope by presenting a veto in the conclave. Ironically, Pius X, though he too would have preferred the election

of Cardinal Rampolla, profited by the last use of the hated right of veto.

Our four years of theology were finally concluded. Celestine and I acquitted ourselves well at the last examination and were declared ready to take up our work as priests in the vineyard of the Lord. Most of the other students returned to their several provinces, but we Americani were allowed to stay on, as professed priests but continuing our studies of sacred eloquence, under Padre Luigi.

This began a time of greater freedom for us, as we were not under the immediate supervision of a director and could mingle with all the members of the community during recreation. We were permitted also to make short visits to a number of the other monasteries in Italy, among them the novitiate of Monte Argentario, the first monastery built by the founder, St. Paul of the Cross, and hence regarded as the cradle of the order.

This quaint old cloister, hallowed by many memories of the sanctity and early struggles of the founder, was a great contrast to the large, rambling monastery in Rome, where wings had been added on every few hundred years, and which could easily house well over a hundred monks. The original sanctuary, hidden away on the mountaintop, seemed almost like a toy miniature of a monastery, as it is preserved in the original form as built by St. Paul himself and his early disciples. The corridors are very narrow, the cells hardly large enough for a six-footer to stretch out full-length on his pallet. Often I would strike my head on entering the door of my cell, which could hardly have been over five and a half feet in height. The window, with rude boards for shutters, was about eighteen inches square.

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This return for a short visit to the first novitiate of the order, the piety and simplicity of the shy novices, and the general atmosphere of other-worldliness brought back a rush of memories of my own happy novitiate, serving to refresh early fervor, dimmed somewhat perhaps by the eight years of hard study since I made my vows. It was a moving experience to renew them here, at the end of my student days, before beginning the active work of my life as a priest.

Celestine and I visited the monastery at Lucca, where we had the double inspiration of visiting the home of Gemma Galgami and meeting her director, Padre Germano. Gemma was a young woman who had acquired a high reputation for sanctity of life and the performance of extraordinary miracles. As she had died only a year or two before, it was interesting to us to meet her parents and sit at table with the patriarch and his family of fourteen or sixteen in an atmosphere rather like that of a small monastery. From the lips of those with whom Gemma had lived we heard stories of her remarkable beauty of life and of the mysterious wonders she was able to perform. It seems to me that she had much in common with that other modern young saint, Thérèse de Lisieux, the Little Flower. Already a considerable cult had spread through Italy, owing in great part to a life of Gemma written by her director, Padre Germano, a Passionist.

Padre Germano had the reputation of being a holy man, a reputation hard to acquire and, more than that, to retain, among brethren with whom you must live in close intimacy the year round. To my mind, holiness means complete unselfishness, living for others in place of oneself. The monk's life and the mother's life of devotion to the interests of others are good starting points

for the achievement of saintliness. A good mother and a good monk are saints, whether they perform known miracles or not. My own mother was an example of the one, and Padre Germano of the other.

He was a small, rotund man of happy, sunny disposition. Although a man of exceptional learning (he had written a textbook of philosophy), he was in personality and temperament as simple as a child. His favorite expletive was "*per Bacco*," and he used it so constantly to express surprise, appreciation, satisfaction, or whatever that we fell into the way of saying: "Well, here comes Padre Perbacco." He was such a kindly, understanding person of such serene temperament, that he made a rather poor superior, for a superior must at times be stern in enforcing the rule.

Many of the psychopathic cases encountered in pastoral work are regarded as possessions or obsessions by the Devil. In accordance with very ancient tradition, every priest receives as one of the minor orders the order of exorcist, supposedly conferring the power of casting out devils. (It is still used in this day and age.) The time was to come, however, when the priest would not be allowed to use the Church's terrible ritual of exorcism without the special and express permission of his bishop. This fact recognizes the tradition that a priest must be of spotless innocence and blameless life in order to cast out devils, else there is the danger that the devil will turn on him with ridicule and, by exposing dark spots in his own life and thus rebuking him, refuse to leave his prey.

Padre Germano, because of his holiness of character, was often chosen by the authorities at Rome to exorcize the rather frequent cases of obsession that came to the attention of the Church. We loved to hear him relate

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his experiences upon returning from these encounters with the Evil One.

I recall one devil with which he had special difficulty, as it seemed inclined to argue with him in perfect Latin in a deep, sepulchral voice that somehow appeared to come rather from the tomb than from the throat of the woman possessed. She seemed to be in a great agony of suffering during the efforts to expel the entity supposed to be in possession of her body and her faculties. Finally Padre Germano commanded the devil to tell his name, which I do not now recall. Padre Germano had a long list of these acquaintances whom he had encountered and generally vanquished.

He explained to us that it was a considerable victory to obtain their names, as they customarily refused to give them until forced to it by a stronger will or by the invocation of the holy names, whereupon, he would relate to us, the unhappy victims seemed plunged into the tortures of the damned.

One case amused us particularly for the reason that, before the final victory, the devil, answering some of the questions put to him, stubbornly answered with the classical expressions *sic* and *ita* for "yes." Among us the less classical form *utique* was almost invariably used. So Padre Germano would repeat the question until at last the learned devil broke out petulantly: "Oh, if you want it your way then, *utique!*" Relating this lesson in good Latin given him by the devil, Padre Germano would chuckle, recounting that anyway he had finally succeeded in expelling the usurper from the poor woman. Leaving his victim in an unconscious heap on the floor, the devil departed with a wild, demonic howl.

Any visit to Padre Germano was good for at least one bloodcurdling story of victims of the Evil One being

thrown violently through the air amid foul imprecations and satanic howls—and victory for the powers of good in the end, accompanied by acrid brimstone fumes and smoke filling the room.

We loved listening to his tales of the preternatural phenomena, which constantly took place during the years he was the spiritual director of Gemma Galgami. The one that impressed us most was her extraordinary way of communicating with him. She would write to him, and, without any human intermediary, he would suddenly find the letter on his table before him. He told us that this had happened a number of times.

After one of my pilgrimages alone to a monastery outside of Rome, I noticed a change of some sort coming over my companion, Father Celestine. With subtle resentment he asked why it was that I had taken to visiting the various old fathers alone instead of with him. I explained that my visits were not for sightseeing or of curiosity, but that it was a deep spiritual experience to meet men of pioneer service in the order, and that by going alone we put ourselves in the way of receiving such advice and admonition as the older monks might deem of individual advantage to us.

Celestine then asked me why Padre Bernardo, the General, had entrusted the money for the expenses of our journey from America to me rather than to him, who was my senior in order of profession. With a laugh I replied that I doubted whether the old General realized which of us was senior, and thought he gave it to me simply by chance. "I could do well without the responsibility," I added in good humor; "so if you would like to take it over—"

This was all very unlike Celestine. We had been good friends for the five years since we had faced the world

together as champions of American scholarship. I did not comprehend that it was the first outward symptom of a mental disturbance which would grow slowly and steadily worse, until some years later, back in America, it would be necessary to hospitalize him, when the obsession that he was being persecuted and discriminated against grew to a full-sized mania.

Before we were to leave Rome to return to begin our active work as priests in our own province in the United States, Padre Luigi obtained for Celestine and me the rare privilege of a private audience with the newly elected pontiff, Pius X. This was a natural and unforgettable climax to the privilege of having seen the coronation.

On that occasion Celestine and I had hurried into Rome before dawn. The people were already gathering, though it would be several hours before the pageantry began. As the great gates were opened the dome of the basilica began to be touched with the pale lemon and rose and lilac of the oncoming day.

The procession was magnificent, bright with the triumphant colors suited to the nature of the coronation, a joyous occasion. The Swiss and the Noble Guards in their traditional ceremonial dress, monsignori in purple, choristers in violet, cardinals in sweeping scarlet and ermine, friars in the brown and black and white habits of their orders, priests in canonicals, the double lines carried the eye up the nave to the entrance along a pathway of light made by myriad points of candlelight, struck up from the burnished breastplates and swords of guards' accouterment, the gleam of jewels in rings and crosses worn by bishops and monsignori, and the glitter of papal miters and triregnum borne on cushions carried

by papal chamberlains in crimson and ermine; all branches of ecclesiastical activity, all ranks of the hierarchy of the Universal Church, were represented in the procession. And dominating the whole Pius X, sitting on the *sedia gestatoria*, resting on the shoulders of the *sediari*, wearing their red damask.

The *sedia* itself was a throne of red velvet and gold, bearing at the back the cypress, the emblem of Leo XIII, for whom the throne had been built. Above the head of Pius X there was the white canopy embroidered in gold, held by eight poles carried by eight ecclesiastical advocates of the Tribunal of the *Signatura*, in rochet and purple cape. And on either side, and slightly above the Holy Father's head the two semicircular ostrich-feather fans, recalling to many in the great throng the fans used in ceremonial processions of the Emperor under whose reign St. Peter, the first Pope, was martyred. The pontifical vestments of the Holy Father were hidden under the enormous cape, richly embroidered in gold and covering with its voluminous folds the floor of the *sedia gestatoria*. On his head was the gem-studded miter, on his hands the white gloves, on the third finger of the right hand the Fisherman's Ring, emblem of papal authority.

The great scene rephotographed itself on my brain as Celestine and I were received in private audience by the Holy Father. He received us with cordial simplicity, allowing us to get on our knees to pay the customary homage of kissing his foot, which he placed on a footstool.

When we were seated, Padre Luigi explained that we had laudably completed our studies in the International College and were now returning to our own province. In his deep, husky voice the pontiff congratulated us and encouraged us to continue serving our Divine Master

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with fidelity. Especially he requested us to do what we could for the *poveri Italiani* in America, those poor countrymen of his who had migrated in such large numbers to the United States in search of better opportunities than their overcrowded fatherland afforded, and who often were without the assistance of priests who spoke their native language.

I was greatly moved by the saintly appearance, the kindly voice, and the humble manner of the Holy Father. He gave the apostolic blessing to the rosaries and medals we had been allowed to bring with us to take back to our parents, and sent his special blessing to all our dear ones at home.

One who has not been raised in the Catholic faith cannot appreciate the overflowing joy that this demonstration of love and kindness from the Vicar of Christ meant to us. Pius X could be stern and ruthless when the integrity of the true faith was at stake—a capacity he was to demonstrate in his purge of the modernist movement in the Church a few years later—but of himself he was a humble, kind, fatherly old man, with all the signs of a saint.

In 1904 we took affectionate leave of all the brethren in Rome whom I had come to love more even than blood brothers, and especially of the old General, Padre Bernardo, and our teacher and friend Padre Luigi, for both of whom I felt great reverence as well as great love. I did not expect to return to the Holy City, and sadness was in my heart as I parted from so much that had become dear to me.

I made a last visit to the tomb of St. Paul of the Cross, under the altar of the magnificent marble chapel built off from the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, adjoining

the monastery. I have not spoken before of this gem of architecture, with its beautiful dome and marble walls and floor, and especially the four giant columns of solid alabaster, a gift to Pius IX from the Khedive of Egypt, which had formerly adorned some ancient Egyptian temple, belike of the goddess Isis. Here, feeling small and insignificant amid all this beauty and splendor, I knelt and humbly renewed my pledges of fidelity and perseverance to our founder.

I paid one last visit, too, to my beloved garden, where so many hours of happy and peaceful contemplation had been spent. I felt that I was leaving a memorable shrine forever.

Again I had been made treasurer for the voyage by Padre Bernardo. Celestine and I had no thought of spending money on ourselves, as we took our vow of poverty very literally. But on one occasion I was feeling ill and, after long debate with myself, decided it would be permissible to spend a quarter for a glass of brandy. It had the result of a wild extravagance, troubling me during the rest of the voyage, and shaming me when I gave an itemized account of the expenditures of the money entrusted to me, at our monastery in West Hoboken, New Jersey. Father Stephen was the Provincial, and I handed him the surplus.

Now that I was back in America, I found myself frequently breaking into Italian in conversation. I remember visiting the rector of the monastery and making quite a lengthy speech on some subject. With an amused smile he let me continue and then said quietly when I had finished: "Now say it in English, Father." I stared at him. I had hardly spoken English in five years, except to teach some of my more ambitious companions in Rome,

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who took advantage of the opportunity to pick up a little English in their spare time. For quite a while after my return I was hampered in both conversation and lecturing by thinking so naturally in Latin and Italian that my tongue stumbled in finding the English expression.

After a few days in St. Michael's Monastery at West Hoboken, Father Stephen called me to his room and told me he had appointed me spiritual director and professor of the last year classics to a small class of students in the monastery at Normandy, Missouri, the scene of my own early studies. Once more the old dread of insufficiency swept over me. Humbly I protested my lack of qualifications for so important an office. Father Stephen, who masked a considerable kindness under an air of abrupt severity, said shortly: "Just do as you are told."

Thus I came to the end of the first part of my monastic life, the years of preparation and study. It was ten years since I had entered the preparatory school at Dunkirk. Now I must give an account of myself, beginning the life of active service to the order and the Church for which I had been prepared.

I still retained the early fervor and earnestness of the novitiate, although older and filled with knowledge of many things. I was faithfully fulfilling my vows and obligations, striving with all the aspiration and energy of my soul toward union with God in prayer and in life. I was a good monk, and I loved the life.

IX

With my little class of seven or eight students, which was to be increased later on to sixteen or eighteen, I entered with all seriousness on my duties as spiritual director and professor of the classics. I modeled my habit of life on the best I knew, taking as my ideal prototype Father Stanislaus; to me he was the perfect director, with the cheerfulness and gaiety of natural optimism, and constant encouragement by word and example toward the attainment of the highest goal of the monk's life: namely, perfect observance of the rule, and continual striving toward union with God in contemplative prayer. Padre Luigi, too, was an ideal teacher, with his complete knowledge of subjects, his clear method of exposition, and his facility in making study a joy and the acquisition of learning one of the real pleasures of life.

My duties as lector and spiritual director occupied the whole of my time. I cannot recall the whole list of studies, but I know it included the last year of Latin, English, mathematics, and perhaps history or physics. I could be a good teacher because I was endowed with endless patience. And I was able to enjoy in some of my students aptitudes not included in my make-up. While I had an excellent memory for ideas, I had a poor one for words. How I used to envy students who could recite long poems, reel off names and dates in history, and write English compositions in flowing sentences of original phrasing! I often put myself to sleep by going through

one of the more complicated demonstrations of Euclid, but it always seemed unbearable labor, demanding too much time, for me to memorize so much as a few lines. There was good reason for my colleagues in Italy to describe my Italian as “*lingua toscana in bocca americana*,” for, while circumstances were to require me to learn a number of languages, I had no knack for them and could speak them only with an appalling American accent.

I think I was indebted to my students for my first real insight into the fact that language is not only for the communication of ideas but also for the painting of pictures. Without guidance in my early reading, or any imagination to speak of, in time I discovered the pleasures of learning to see images seen by the author, who had been able to use words for painting them. It opened up a field of æsthetic enjoyment of literature, far beyond the scientific and philosophic, which had been long unknown to me.

My capacity for patience often came in handy. One of my students, for instance, a delightful individual whose one great ambition was to be a priest, simply did not have the talent to learn. He was already professed, so the responsibility for his life in the order was not mine, though I knew he would never be able to master philosophy and theology. Notwithstanding, I took great pains with him in algebra and geometry, but those, too, were mysteries he was unable to fathom. After a time, seeing that it would be impossible for him to pass the tests, he chose to return home rather than become a lay brother. I felt sorry about that; for myself, if it had been impossible to go on to the priesthood, I should have preferred to remain as a lay brother; but with him the priesthood was the goal rather than the monastic life.

The incurable awkwardness of this youth was a constant source of amusement to the class and the community. He was utterly lacking in co-ordination. Hardly a day passed that he did not fall down the stairs, trip over his own feet in choir, or do some other outlandish thing that stirred up the community sense of the ridiculous. He knew we loved him, and never minded our amusement over him, yet I used to think he must occasionally suffer privately from the constant embarrassment he brought on himself.

One of his crowning scenes was enacted at the formal examination of the students at the end of a year's study, in the presence of the examiners and the superiors. The young monk had been dispatched to bring refreshments for all in an interlude of the examination. As he walked most carefully into the middle of the classroom, carrying a large tray holding a huge pitcher of lemonade and a dozen or two glasses, I said to myself: "Bravo! This time he'll make it!" In an instant, without any visible reason, he sprawled headlong to the floor, scattering glasses and the mouth-watering contents of the pitcher in all directions. He picked himself up, surveyed the wreckage ruefully, and joined in the general merriment. I felt touched, for it is not given to everyone to be able to laugh wholeheartedly at himself.

I had another student who contributed generously to the amusement of the class, but in a rather different way. This was Confrater Leander. He was a Jewish youth who at about the age of fifteen had become a Catholic, unbeknown to his parents, keeping the secret from them for a number of years. He was full of fervor and an excellent student, but he had an irrepressible habit of telling comical stories, mainly on his own race, and with the knack of a gifted mimic.

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Guido, the Italian, amazed us with his versatility at putting the cart before the horse. Little Benjamin, who was the first in order of profession, was of Alsatian parents; I could see that, having the seriousness of the German, he would take to the abstractions of philosophy like a duck to water; but he was not so quick with the subtleties of humor, and when the class was enriched some months later by the addition of a number of Irish students, I noticed that Confrater Benjamin was frequently winded in trying to keep up with the point.

I mention this jolly side of the student life to show that a monk does not cease to become human, is not constantly going about with melancholy and long-faced piety. On the contrary, in time of recreation and other relaxation the monk is gay and happy and enjoys fun and games as much as his brothers "in the world"; in this way he keeps well-balanced and healthy in body and mind. The sad, too serious youth is apt to fall prey to illusions under the strict discipline of the monastic life.

I enjoyed the teaching, though I soon found that one can teach well only after knowing a subject from every angle. This was especially true with respect to philosophy. The students were allowed to present their difficulties and objections both in and outside of class, and I soon discovered that to answer them to their and my own satisfaction required a much deeper knowledge than comes from one's first study. Father Philip, an old philosopher of the order, used to cite this paradox when embarking on instruction in philosophy to a new class of students: "To begin properly the study of philosophy one should already have had a complete course in it." I at least found out that to teach philosophy more was needed than merely a complete course in it.

During the teaching year the lector was dispensed

from the duty of rising at midnight to sing Matins, in order that he might have more time for study. Moreover, he was master of his own time. I took advantage of this privilege; when the monks would rise at the sound of the rattle for Matins, I would often still be up studying, in the hope of getting a more comprehensive view of my subject and penetrating more deeply into it.

The other, more difficult office I filled during these teaching years was that of director of students. This meant that I was their immediate superior in charge both of their physical activities and of their spiritual welfare. I directed and supervised the work they performed toward the upkeep of the monastery. While most of the menial work was performed by the lay brothers, the students had as their chores the cleaning of corridors, the choir, chapels, the library, and recreation rooms and also had charge of the flower garden. The garden had to be planted and cared for so that an abundance of fresh flowers for the altar was available according to the changing seasons.

Looking after the health and physical well-being of my charges included taking them to the doctor and the dentist. In short, I was father and mother to a brood of growing young men, and I was confronted with having to learn many things I had never dreamed were involved in the duties of a monk. A great deal of time that was precious to me was being spent on visits to a doctor in St. Louis, in connection with troubles that the infirmarian could not take care of, and I found myself jealous for my own studies.

But here too there were compensations. The doctor was a very good man, who had been a prominent allopath until, at the deathbed request of his mother, who

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had received such help from homeopathy during her lifetime that she was eager for her son to investigate it, he took a course in a homeopathic clinic. He was so impressed by the results obtained by the method that he simply gave up practice by his old method and adopted homeopathy.

Through him I became much interested in the field of medicine and healing and, under his guidance, did some deeper study in anatomy and physiology. I read several ponderous works on homeopathy, including Hahnemann's *Organon*, a work on *materia medica*, and another on therapeutics. I also procured a physician's case containing one hundred and twenty different remedies, with the appropriate supply of pellets, alcohol, vials, corks, and so on. My class was convulsed with laughter when I let it be known that I was now ready for business.

I soon became amazingly proficient in looking up the symptoms described by students, deciding on the appropriate remedy. I wanted my interest in medicine to be practical as well as theoretical. I felt, too, that in this way we could save many a trip to the doctor, and so I began my "practice."

In some cases I had the grace to telephone the doctor and "consult" about the remedy, but with practice I became rather adept in diagnosing the minor ailments of my young men and in prescribing for them. At least, I prescribed to my own satisfaction, though from time to time I had the impression that my students did not think so highly of the quackery of their director. On one occasion, unobserved, I saw two students reach into the small pockets we had in the sleeve of our habit, draw out small vials of my pills, raise them on high as for a silent toast, and then swallow at random. The spontane-

ous dexterity of the ceremonial was such that I concluded it was not the first time my medical skill had been discounted.

During this period the most important of my duties was the spiritual direction of the students. Mine were the responsibility and task of nourishing the young seed of the spiritual life that had been planted during the novitiate in these young candidates for sainthood. We were never to lose sight of the fact that however we had to study and, in later life, to preach and labor in the Lord's vineyard, the fundamental purpose of our life was the complete dedication of our whole being to God. We were monks not primarily to teach or to preach, but to offer our lives to God and to make them worthy of His acceptance.

We labored incessantly to purify our souls from those faults of character that were native to us. One of the duties of the director was to aid each student in finding out and overcoming his predominant failings. In some it would be pride and ambition, in others love of ease and sloth, in still others impatience and anger. We found that most faults and failures flowed from these major ones—*predominant passion*, it was called—and so relentless war was declared on it.

Every Sunday morning I called each of the students in turn to my room for what we called the conference. I inquired about their progress in prayer, their efforts in conquering their ruling faults, any special difficulties they might have in dealings with their companions or in the observance of the rule. If I found signs of discouragement, my duty was to reanimate them with hope and confidence. If I detected signs of tepidity, that great enemy of progress in the spiritual life, I strove to rein-

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spire them with their first fervor, showing them the inevitable result of imperceptibly growing cold in the service of God, which would be the loss of their religious vocation.

It was my duty to control their spiritual reading, giving them such books as I judged most suited to their individual dispositions and particular needs. They were in a species of spiritual greenhouse or conservatory, where the tender plants were to be cared for according to their nature. The responsibility involved was to me indescribably serious, and I did the best I knew to make them perfect monks.

Besides the conference there was the weekly confession, wherein the student confessed his failings and was encouraged afresh to make further efforts toward his high goal. In order to protect the freedom of confession, the student could always go to the rector of the monastery or, it was decreed later on, to any of certain priests of the community, designated by the provincial superior. This was to enable the student to unburden himself to another priest, if he should experience any difficulty in confessing to his director.

I inherited from my mother a sympathy and compassion for others and never lost patience even when the fire of the first fervor at times seemed entirely to have died down. I continued to wrestle with the demon of lukewarmness in a student until I had brought him to a semblance of his early piety. An outsider cannot begin to realize how seriously we took this matter of keeping up the fervor of the spirit in the service of God, or how difficult it is to rekindle the fire of devotion once it has, voluntarily or involuntarily, been allowed to cool.

Only on two occasions, so far as I can remember, did I have to give up the fight, admitting defeat. Both were

cases where the standard of perfection had not been held high by former directors. These students had drifted into an easygoing negligence in the performance of their duties and soon lost all love for the monastic life. I was unable to revivify it and, sadly, had to acquiesce in their request for a dispensation from their vows, permission to return to their homes. I remember feeling a great indignation toward the indifference of some directors of students, who did so little to foster the spiritual life of their charges.

It was also my duty as director to see that the health of the students did not suffer from too much application to study or too ardent a pursuit of asceticism. The rule offered sufficient means of mortification of the flesh, and I was wary of permitting the use of too many extra devices with which the ascetics used to torture their bodies.

The founder of the Passionists, St. Paul of the Cross, in his wiser old age complained of the excessive zeal of his youth, which caused him to abuse his body by long fasts, exposure to the elements, and so on, pushing it often to the outer limits of endurance. He found that because of this maltreatment his body in later life was not the useful instrument and servant of man that it was meant to be. The saints in their earlier life were often carried away by an almost inhuman frenzy against their bodies, which it was inevitable they should come to regret in maturer years.

Prudence and moderation are not likely to be virtues of youth, so I was on guard with my young would-be saints lest they fall into excesses of unwise penitential practices. Had I given permission for all their requests for hair shirts, scourges, sharp-pointed iron girdles and the like, I should have had on my hands a company of neurotics unfit for study and for the regular observance

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of the rule. Year in and year out, the rule was a great enough discipline of human nature. Still, it was more rewarding on the whole to direct fervent students needing to be curbed than, as sometimes happened, those who seemed to require constant prodding.

Young animals leading the somewhat unnatural confined life of study and prayer need relaxation and exercise in the open air, so I leaned to the side of a liberal interpretation of the rule, permitting and initiating walks, active games such as baseball, and skating, and I believe my students gained rather than lost in their studies and in their spiritual life by my direction in these matters. The youngsters were always hungry for a free afternoon when they could walk or play or for a free day when they could have a picnic at some remote spot.

The rule allowed one entirely free afternoon twice a month, but somehow or other I always seemed to find good reason for granting an outing every week, weather being favorable. In summer they would take long walks into the country or—preferably, so far as they were concerned—a game of baseball on the monastery grounds, which were still situated outside the city. In winter, hockey, skating, or long tramps were the thing.

I accompanied them on their outings and usually managed to take part in their games. While my reason for the latter was logically based on the welfare of my students, I have a strong impression that I was motivated in no small degree by my own great love for games. The Teuton in me severely disapproved, but what was left of the irresponsibility of the Celt had its way.

X

I had spent four years teaching the classics and philosophy and acting as director of students when the astonishing news came from my provincial that the General of the order had appointed me director of the International College at Rome and that I was to proceed thither forthwith. That Rome should turn to America to fill a position that in many ways was most responsible was unheard of in the order. It took everyone by surprise. As for myself, it would be hard to imagine anything that could have been so unexpected.

It was a distinction and a great honor, but much of the enjoyment I should have experienced merely in the opportunity to return to Rome was blurred by the old feeling of insufficiency, of unworthiness. More news came through. It appeared that in addition to being director of the chief college of the order I was also to be professor of dogmatic theology. Either task seemed to me very large; in combination they seemed altogether beyond my ability.

To make matters more complicated, the college had been reorganized into a postgraduate school, where a two-year super-course was arranged for selected priests from the several provinces who had already completed the fixed course of studies. The plan was designed to give these more talented monks a postgraduate course in theology, scripture, and canon law at the mother house,

in order that, having acquired thorough theological training and drunk more deeply of the spirit of the order at its fountainhead, they might return to their own countries and in turn become lectors and directors of students. This would ensure throughout the order the contiguous spirit and customs of the founder.

As membership in religious orders and houses throughout the world grows in numbers, there is some tendency to drift away from the original traditions and slowly relax the first fervor. The rule and canon law try to stem gradual deterioration by making obligatory annual canonical visitations of every monastery by the provincial superior, and a visitation by the General at least every six years to every monastery of the order in the world. Such a visitation as this latter was that made by Padre Bernardo while I was in my novitiate, and I well remember the impression it made on us: the sense of renewed attachment and spiritual devotion to God and to our order.

Close questioning regarding observance of the rule by all concerned, and detailed personal examination, are certain to bring to the surface any relaxation or abuse of the rule, and the visiting superior, out of his deep zeal for strict observance, rebukes offenders and exhorts all to renewed fervor, and on his departure leaves strenuous regulations, which must be read to the community once a month. In this way an altogether desirable check is put on decline of discipline.

There are many factors that may vitiate the supervision of the superiors: national temperatures and customs; the demands of missionary work, taking many of the fathers away from the monastery for longer periods than was anticipated in the rule; the occasional inadvertent election of a superior who, from temperament or

some other contributing factor, is not strict or tenacious enough to discern or stem a downward current of relaxation; and of course the basic trend of human nature to follow the path of least resistance. As for the individual, it is hard for orders to regain lost fervor, difficult to reform a community that has grown lax in religious observance.

The history of religious orders contains many examples of a falling away from the first inspiration and high ideals of the founder, and a growth of worldliness and disorder, then the appearance of a crusading reformer who, finding it impossible to bring his brethren back to the original spirit, nevertheless with a few of the more fervent monks has started a new branch of the order. If emphasis is placed on any such downward trend through the ages, the story can be made a depressing one indeed. But the whole picture of ever renewed efforts and struggle to reach the highest attainment of the monastic ideal is an unequivocal credit to the vitalizing spirit of religion, which has ever been kept alive in the Church. The humane and compassionate comment of Christ when the Apostles slept in the very hour of his trial might well be applied to monks: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Yet the emphasis never has been left on the Apostles' moment of sleeping, but rather on the whole picture of their devotion and service.

The Passionists have been extraordinarily successful in keeping green the spirit of their founder, St. Paul of the Cross. This can be done only by eternal vigilance on the part of the higher superiors, and that vitality of the Passionist Order drew me to it.

It may be interesting just here to interject the simple historical facts concerning the origin of the order. St. Paul of the Cross was born at Ovada in the Republic of

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Genoa in January 1694. He received his inspirations concerning the work for which God destined him when he was a ten-year-old boy, living in his father's native place, Castellazzo, in Lombardy.

There subsequently he was clothed by his Bishop in the habit of the Passion, and there he wrote the rule, beginning it on December 2, 1720 and finishing it in five days. He was still a layman, and had as yet assembled no companions to form a community. The underlying theme of the rule was, through fervent penance and prayer, to awaken in the faithful the memory of the Passion of Christ.

The congregation was approved by Benedict XIV, and "on Mount Argentario the sanctity of the ancient anchorites was revived." In due time the same pontiff gave to St. Paul and his companions the Church of St. John and St. Paul and the large house attached to it on Monte Celio. It was the aspiration of the founder to blend the contemplative and the active, uniting the solitary life adopted by the Carthusians, or Trappists, with the active life of the Jesuits, or Lazarists. The Passionists' order was to be a mendicant one, maintaining no endowments and owning no property, either private or community, other than the houses and a few attached acres, the order maintaining itself through its own labors and voluntary contributions.

By itself eternal vigilance is not sufficient to maintain vitality in an order. The heart of the individual monk must keep alive its share of the fires of fervor. This in turn requires the unremitting care of wise and ardent superiors, from the first days of the novitiate through the student years, until the spiritual life of each monk individually attains that maturity and stability whereby it is enabled to continue and grow.

In founding the college in Rome, the superiors had in mind the plan of forming a training school for future superiors, who would first become steeped in the true spirit of the order, in the mother house, and then go out to help in preserving the unity of tradition and custom throughout an ever spreading order.

I left for Rome in the autumn of 1907, taking four young Passionist priests who had just finished their studies and were to take the postgraduate course under me in the Holy City.

As the number of monasteries in the United States had recently grown and the distance between them was great, it had been decided to create two provinces, the eastern and the western, out of the one large province that had existed since the first arrival of the Passionists in America, in 1852. Each of these provinces was sending two of its priests to join the International College.

Through more contact with the outside world during my four previous years as leader and director, I had become somewhat more civilized since my first trip to Rome and felt better able to appreciate the advantages of an ocean voyage. I remember even having a few games of chess with my fellow passengers, a game I had learned as a child by watching my parents play. I could still conjure up a laughable picture of my mother in mock fury sweeping the chessmen from the board when my father, with his more methodical mind, had succeeded in bringing her within a move or two of mate. My father's temper was not dangerous, but it was quick, and in turn he would react with spirit at being deprived of the anticipated kill almost at the moment of triumph. I had not been able to play chess for over thirteen years and I enjoyed these few games on board ship though I had a

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half-guilty conscience, as if I were stealing back some of the sweets of a life I had renounced.

It happened that my young charges were of jolly disposition, and the voyage was a great lark for them, freed as they were from the routine and discipline of their usual life, which, however cheerfully and faithfully followed, never ceases to curb natural inclinations. Moreover, these priests were more mature than I had been on my first journey to Rome, and consequently not so gauche.

I was welcomed most heartily by my many old friends in Rome. It saddened me to find some dear ones missing. Some had departed the earthly life, others were fulfilling duties elsewhere. The presence I missed most was saintly old Padre Bernardo's. He had obtained permission from Pope Pius X to resign his office because of his age and failing health and had retired to one of the more secluded monasteries to prepare for death.

I took immediate charge of the newly reorganized college. An ambitious project, it was soon in full swing. The events of the next four years, during which I was director of this college, do not always fall in their right order in my memory; but it is of no great moment whether certain students and happenings belonged to the first course of two years or to the following one, for this is not a definitive history, but the story of some highlights that shine in my memory of a happy period of my life.

As my students had already completed their course in theology, I had to choose some text for them other than the regular manuals that were in use in the schools of theology. I took a bold step, one that surprised everyone. I selected the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas. This is the most profound work on the Christian doctrine ever

written. Thomas of Aquino was the deepest thinker and most lucid writer that Scholasticism and the Catholic Church can boast of. Of course, he owed much to those who had gone before, especially to Albertus Magnus, his teacher; but in my opinion he outstripped them all in his understanding of Aristotle, the magnificence and depth of his own conceptions, and the limpid clearness of his expression. The *Summa* has had many commentators, the greatest of them undoubtedly Gaetano. But to understand Gaetano one has to refer back to Thomas's original text.

There had been a period when I thought that abstruseness—like that of Kant or Hegel—was a necessary and sure sign of profundity. After studying the *Summa* deeply, however, I am inclined to think that it may be due at times to lack of clarity in thinking. To be sure, one needs a thorough grounding in that most exact of all vehicles of communication, the Scholastic terminology; but equipped with this, one can explore deeper and more subtle regions of thought, both in philosophy and in theology, with St. Thomas as guide than with any other master, either before or since his time.

The Scholastics are often accused of hairsplitting by those whose thought and expression would hardly stand the test of a little Scholastic analysis. No harm can ever come from adopting a vocabulary in which words mean exactly one thing, no less, no more. We are in an age that has very little use for such exact thinking. We accuse of quibbling anyone who defines his terms strictly, in such a way that they have no fringes of uncertain and overlapping meaning. A Schoolman would soon put an end to many present-day controversies by showing that a term was being used in different senses by overheated

opponents, who make up for looseness of thought by their ardor.

It seems to me that the Scholastics brought the human reason as an instrument of ratiocination to the highest and sharpest point it has ever attained. After them came Francis Bacon and the use of inductive reasoning to replace the old methods of deduction, and the consequent interest in the study of nature and its laws, out of which has come our stupendous advance in science.

How ill-founded are most of our criticisms of past customs and institutions! How easy it is in the light of present-day knowledge and achievement to ridicule and condemn the men, the ideas, and the customs of a past age! Yet we are what we are only because they lived. Much of the wisdom and most of the beauty of the past is lost because we have no sufficient knowledge and imagination to divest ourselves of our modern refinements and relive the struggles, the hopes and fears, the faiths and beliefs of our ancestors in contact, like us, with the mystery of life. Is it not puerile as well as futile to condemn the games and dreams and thoughts of childhood? Are we much more than children ourselves, and will not our descendants in turn criticize and condemn our vaunted enlightenment? How grotesque to us is the 1910 model of a motor car, which was the pride and joy of both its builder and its owner! The old-fashioned bathing dress and the moral ideas that produced it have gone and we are none the worse for it, except in the eyes of those who are not growing with the race, but have allowed themselves to become crystallized at some stage of their development.

My plea is for a sympathetic understanding of the past, so that we may recapture the perfume of its beauty.

Criticism seems to me to be a necessary nuisance. It is generally the product of those unimaginative minds which can canalize but not construct. The demolition process is a natural and therefore necessary process; but nature does it in a *living* way; the destruction of the old is caused by and is part of the generation of the new life. The present is the fruit of the past and the seed of the future, as is the tree at every stage of its life. Corrosive criticism of the past is as fruitless as is the disproportionate praise of it by the *laudator temporis acti* who would arrest growth and go back to the good old days. The onward urge of life is too strenuous for many of us, and we would make a static paradise of peace and security for ourselves away from the swiftly flowing stream, and dream of such a state for ourselves after death.

As my discursive mother was wont to say, *Where was I?*

At any rate, we adopted St. Thomas as our guide and test in trying to reach a deeper knowledge of life and religion. I adopted his method in teaching too, and found it very efficient. Each chapter of his *Summa* is a thesis, but before proceeding to the strict formal proof of it he cited all the objections to it with a *Videtur quod non*. Then he presented his series of arguments in strict, terse syllogistic form, beginning with *sed contra*. Finally he took up in turn each of the objections he had previously brought forward and answered them.

This method I found very valuable for two reasons. First, it gave the student a general knowledge of the ground covered by the thesis, and the opinions of the different schools of philosophy on the question. The second advantage was the psychological one. Students are singularly blessed with that general cussedness of hu-

manity which causes us to rise instinctively in opposition to any general statement or thesis offered. If I presented them with the thesis first and tried to prove it, I found them unsympathetic and reaching in their minds for arguments against it. But if I proposed the opposite doctrine in the beginning, trying, for example, to prove that God did not exist, they would rise like fish to the bait and seek to disprove me. As a result I had them on the hook and receptive for my real thesis: namely, that God does exist. It was perhaps a subtle device, but workable, opposing cussedness with cussedness!

The one drawback to the method was that when treating one subject in particular—say, monism, and pantheism—I always succeeded in being so convincing in my arguments for the wrong doctrine that it was then exceedingly difficult to get the students out of the hole into which I had put them. It is possible that I had an innate leading to some concept of monism, for I argued that if God is *ipsum esse*, very being itself—as it were, beingness—everything, to exist, must participate in His nature; otherwise it would be outside of being, or non-being, nothing. Therefore a contingent or created being could not exist, and dualism, which is fundamental in Christianity, was false.

The Scholastics, of course, had a nice distinction that served neatly to solve this objection. They would say that the term *being* is not applied univocally or in the same sense to God and to created things, that the latter really are non-beings in the sense that God is being. To one who accepts dualism, this must be satisfactory as the best solution of the difficulty; but to others it must sound like a distinction without a difference.

To my students, after giving them this orthodox solution, I could only say that this was an example of the

inability of human reason to arrive at any complete understanding of the ultimates, that the human mind if it delved deeply enough would always find itself before insoluble problems. I would add to that now, perhaps, that the only honest position of the human reason alone, unaided by faith or intuition or some other faculty of the soul, is that of the agnostic, who says: "I do not know." But fortunately reason is not the whole man.

During the four years that I was connected with the International College we had different professors for the various subjects of the curriculum. If I remember aright, Padre Luigi taught canon law, and Padre Ireneo took sacred scripture from the critical standpoint.

These years for me, and I hope for the students, were fruitful and happy ones. I plunged more deeply than ever into the seas of thought and human learning. I acquainted myself, as far as my faculties and time permitted, with the various systems of philosophy that had been built up to explain existence.

The common impression among outsiders is that the Catholic priest is allowed to read only works by approved authors. This is not so. The *Index Expurgatorius* is not for the priest, but for the general faithful. The priest is expected to keep abreast of the thought of the day in order to defend the faith, just as a physician must keep up with the advance of medical science. The sole exception made to the priest's freedom is that he is not allowed to read pornographic literature written deliberately and solely for its indecency. Thus none of the classical literature of any age is excluded, nor even the heretical or antireligious works of authors antagonistic to the Church. This same permission to read books forbidden to the ordinary Catholic may be obtained from

Rome by educated laymen who, like writers and reviewers, may have sufficient reason for so doing.

But I read and studied from my own center of certainty. I read to refute. Never for one instant in studying the works of an author opposed to the Church did I say to myself: "Perhaps he may be right."

It was during these teaching years in Rome that Pius X began his crusade against modernism in the Church, and orthodoxy was at a premium. This new superheresy was entirely different from the modernist movement in the Protestant churches in America, as opposed to the fundamentalists. It was more akin to the advanced position of the Protestant churches in Germany, where so many of the leading lights were out-and-out rationalists. It had its origin, in my opinion, in the infiltration of German philosophy in Italian universities, especially of Hegel, who was very popular in Italy. This subjective philosophy found its way into the Catholic schools and seminaries, and soon a new theology was being taught, which served perfectly to bring Catholic doctrine into line with modern thought, but unfortunately did away with the supernaturalism of tradition. The professors were making a distinction between the Christ of history, who was like any other man, and the Christ of faith, who could be the Son of God or anything else that subjective faith cared to make him. Naturally, the dogmas of the infallibility of the Church, the eternal torments of hell, and the many others that seemed repugnant to human reason were treated in the same way as that of the divinity of Christ, and the new faith was soon unrecognizable as having any resemblance to the old.

The extraordinary feature of this movement was the great rapidity with which it spread, especially through Italy and France. It was like a mushroom growth, seem-

ing to appear overnight. Prelates and professors were found everywhere boldly professing and defending it. No doctrine had ever arisen in the Church so entirely subversive of all the ancient teachings. Yet it was being taught in the seminaries and religious colleges as though it were the most innocent of theories.

Rome awakened in time to the existence in its midst of this full-grown monster of all heresies, and the remedy applied was drastic and swift. Pius X solemnly published a syllabus condemning as heretical the leading propositions of the movement, but he was not content with doing only this. He started a purge of the teaching institutions of the Church, equal in thoroughness to any Russian house-cleaning. Professors were dismissed on the least suspicion of being tainted by the new virus. Prelates, writers, and teachers, if they refused to retract their theories and to sign a new profession of faith drawn up against this new heresy, were summarily excommunicated, regardless of past services. Loisy, the French scholar, and Father Tyrrell, the learned English Jesuit, were among those who fell under the displeasure and ban of the Church.

To apply the remedy to the whole Church, to make it lasting, and to ferret out to the last man these new enemies of orthodoxy, the Pope imposed on every bishop throughout the world the obligation of appointing in his diocese secret spies, whose names were not to be disclosed, and who were to report anyone known to be infected with the fatal disease or who should develop symptoms of it in the future.

The collapse of the movement was more sudden than its meteoric rise. A few of the leaders proved obstinate and would not retract. They were expelled from the fold forthwith, so that they would no longer be able to infect

the flock. Father Tyrrell was one of these, but even he, I believe, sent for a priest on his deathbed to be received back into the Church, so deep were the roots of faith in his Catholic heart.

I became as attached to my new class of priest students as I had been to my first small brood back in Normandy, Missouri. I could understand how parents lived not only their own lives but those of their offspring. My students' ills and troubles of body and soul became my earnest worries, and I thought constantly of keeping them happy, healthy and holy men.

Parents are also apt, by instinct, to love one child more than another, however much the outward manifestation is controlled. During this Roman period I had a certain partiality, which I think never showed, toward one of the students. Padre Leone was a Dutch student who came to our college from the Province of the Netherlands for the postgraduate course. He had, without exception, the deepest, most philosophical mind of any student ever to sit under my teaching. And yet he was not of the type often found among university professors, a brain on legs, but was endowed with imagination and intuition. Equally interesting, he was still capable of learning, as professors on the average are not.

During our residence in Rome, Leone and I used to carry on arguments by means of small written notes, each of which would contain a syllogism, or the answer to a syllogism, laid out in terse Scholastic terms. One of the questions we argued in this manner over a period of weeks was the famous one of the probabilism of moral theology. I was a probabilist, and Leone was a probabili-orist. We argued back and forth, one syllogism at a time, but as happens with most such arguments, after many

weeks each of us remained "of the same opinion still"! In matters of ethics it is hard to get unanimity of opinion on many questions. Let me illustrate by a practical example.

Is it ever right to tell a lie to save a man's life?

Put this simply in the abstract, the answer seems, to the strict moralist, a simple one; as the end does not justify the means, and as a lie is intrinsically evil, no motive can ever justify it. So to the strict moralist the answer would be in the negative. But many other questions are involved, and in the effort to get down to fundamental principles moral theologians have won for themselves the opprobrious epithets of casuist, and Jesuit.

There is the question of the nature of a lie, and the consistency of its evil; of the nature of truth, and of man's right to know or demand the truth. There are other questions, lying deep at the root of ethics, which it is not necessary to go into here.

Questions in morals do not come to the priest in the abstract, but as concrete facts. Hence let us go a little farther, giving our question flesh and bones. Let us say that I have a friend in my house who, for no just reason, is being sought by a bitter enemy who has sworn to kill him on sight. The enemy comes armed to my door and asks if my friend is with me. I must act quickly and convincingly if I am to deny his presence and prevent a murder, because an evasive answer would be interpreted as an admission of my friend's presence.

My mother presented an amusing example of Irish casuistry. She had always insisted to her children that we should never tell a lie under any circumstances whatever. It happened, as it will, that the doorbell would ring at times when she did not wish to see anyone. So she

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would say to whoever was to answer the bell: "Say that I am out—but give me time enough to get out into the back garden and make it true!" I have been told that modern moralists have found a simpler, less devious cover for escape from unwelcome events. It seems that it is permissible to be "not at home" in a society where usage has given that phrase the meaning "not receiving," "not at home" with the mental reservation: "to you."

In the case of our question, however, subterfuge is out of the question. Let us assume also that I live in the country and have no telephone, so a delaying action, to call police, is impossible. Am I therefore justified in boldly and convincingly averring that my friend is not in my house? Or, come what may, must I admit his presence? If so, what are the grounds that warrant my exposing him to murder?

Moralists differ in their opinions on the question. The strictest would hold that I must tell the truth, regardless of consequence to myself or to others, for the reason that evil, no matter how small, may not be committed, even to prevent a larger evil.

Despite the almost universal opinion to the contrary, the Catholic theologian does not hold that the end ever justifies a means that is intrinsically evil. Nevertheless, the theologians do have recourse to some subtle reasoning in order to prove that what usually is evil can, in certain circumstances, not be justified by a good end, but will, because of crucial circumstances, cease to be vicious. Self-defense against murder would not be held culpable.

Thus the more subtle moralist would advise me that I may, in good conscience, stoutly deny the presence of my friend in my house. To defend his conclusion he would go into the nature of language, and into the evil of deception as a sin against society, which would have

no protection unless lying were proscribed. And he would also go into the right of an individual to know and to demand the truth; he could bulwark his contention with other fundamental principles of ethics.

I am not so much concerned with the solution of this case as I am in using it to show how in hundreds of concrete cases the moralists are divided into many schools of opinion, some extremely strict, some very lax, with a host of more moderate opinions in between these extremes. One of the practical questions for the individual is which of these opinions he may adopt to be free from guilt. Must he choose the most probable one, as being the safest? The probabiliors say he need not follow the safest opinion, but must at least choose the more probable as against another that is considered less probable, from weight either of reasons or of authority. Finally the probabilists, who hold the field at present in the Church, assert that a man need not necessarily take the most certain or even the more probable opinion, but may act on an opinion that is truly and soundly probable, supported both by good reasons and by respectable authority. Naturally, a lax opinion can never serve as a criterion of right conduct.

So in the above *casus moralis* I need not follow the strictest and safest opinion (safest in the moral sense, as the least liable to violate the law, human or divine), but may with a good conscience adopt the probable opinion, which says that in this case what is ordinarily a lie ceases to be one, at least an evil one, as the enemy has no right to ask me the whereabouts of my friend. Hence I do him and society no harm in telling him an untruth—in fact, quite the contrary.

Well, Padre Leone and I argued back and forth on this famous and much disputed question in moral theol-

ogy. He, as the more timid, took sides with those who held that we must always choose the action more probably right. I, with the outlaw touch of the Irish in me, supported the theory that we may with impunity act in accordance with any opinion that is soundly probable.

Naturally, we wandered far afield to seek to prove our own and to disprove the other's position. He had recourse to the more abstract principles of right, the inviolability of God's law, the necessity of avoiding even the remote possibility of breaking so much as the letter of the law, and so on. I took man's side, trying to show that in human affairs certainty or near certainty is hard to reach, that God could not condemn us if we followed a rule of conduct that appeared to holy and wise men right and good, even though there was the incidental possibility of an unintentional violation of a law. The argument finished, I recall, when I delivered what I considered a knock-out blow by an example of the Church herself, permitting this possibility of unintentional wrong in the case of trial marriage (not Judge Ben Lindsey's sort) when it was not certain that two persons were physically capable of marriage in relation to each other. This should have overcome good Leone, but it didn't. Quietly he said he thought the Church wrong in this hypothetical instance of practical discipline.

Another, rather unmonkish venture took a good deal of our time at one period. It was the making of artificial diamonds, or rather the making of real diamonds in the laboratory.

Leone had stumbled on a method of obtaining pure liquid carbon. And as the diamond is merely crystallized carbon, we thought we were near that goal which has attracted so many scientists in the past, that all we

needed do was to crystallize the liquid carbon. But that was our difficulty. We believed that by simultaneously vaporizing the liquid and submitting it to great pressure, we should achieve our end. We made many efforts and tried all the methods our ingenuity and limited facilities permitted, but the inevitable result was common carbon in an amorphous state.

We had different, strange-looking containers made by a machine shop in the city. We could see that the machinists wondered what use two monks could have for such curious-looking *ordegnei*. But we never succeeded in getting one that could be perfectly sealed. Then, too, we could not develop sufficient pressure to resemble those conditions under which nature evidently produces the precious stones. It was lots of fun each time, waiting for the metal to cool, hoping that at last we would have made the great discovery. Our interest was purely scientific, of course, as we had no use for money and could not possess or own anything. At last we faced the fact that, with our poor equipment, success was out of the question. We returned to the simple problem of solving the riddle of life, which needed no apparatus!

It was during the first year of my new duties in Rome that I had a very interesting insight into the politics of religious orders.

The General Chapter, to elect the general and his consultors as supreme rulers of the order for the ensuing six years and to pass such necessary legislation as the changing times might require, was about to be held. Now in religious orders, as in all bodies politic, there are two tendencies or parties, the one conservative, which would adhere to the wisdom and practice of the past, holding in reverence the lives and teachings of the founders and

the elder brethren; the other liberal or progressive, which would modify and accommodate the older (ancient) customs of the horse-and-buggy days, so to speak, to the changed conditions of modern times, while retaining intact, they would aver, the fundamental principles of the founder.

The General Chapter of the order is composed of the higher superiors, namely the provincial superior and his two assistants or consultors from each province of the order. The provinces outside Italy were considered the liberalizing influences, while the representatives from the five or six Italian provinces generally stood for holding fast to the old traditions.

But this year of 1908, in the face of the modernist movement in the Church, there had sprung up among the Italians a runaway form of modernism, not in theology, but in regard to modifications of the rule. There was even talk of doing away with the medieval custom of rising in the middle of the night to sing the Divine Office, so characteristic of the ancient monastic practice, which the Passionists were one of the few if not the only one of the more modern orders to retain.

The saintly old conservative fathers felt that the devil of change was about to ruin the order we all loved, as it had in successive generations relaxed the original rule and spirit of so many of the ancient orders in the course of centuries. How far, they would argue, the modern Franciscan had come from the poverty, humility, and simplicity of St. Francis!

I, certainly, was all against relaxation and change and for a strong stand on the rule as written and handed down to us, for this adherence to the original rule and spirit of its founder had in my youth been what influenced me to choose the Passionist Order. Father Luigi

was of the same mind as I, and we boldly planned and carried out together a coup d'état.

That old saint Padre Bernardo had been elected General for several terms and had been re-elected once more in 1902. As long as he was at the head of things, the rule and our old traditions were safe. But a couple of years after his re-election he had obtained from the Pope, for reasons of age, permission to resign his Generalship and retire to a secluded monastery to rest from his labors and make ready for death. This made Padre Pietro Paolo, the first Consultor and next in line of succession, the General ad interim, till the next Chapter, in 1908. It was during the three or four years of his rule that the modernizing spirit had grown; he was thought to be partly responsible, and many did not want him as chairman or president of the oncoming Chapter.

As Professor of Canon Law we had in Padre Luigi a remarkable man. He had joined the order after having spent some years as a secular priest, giving up a brilliant career in his own diocese, upon which he was well advanced. He came to us fresh from his novitiate and was a simple monk and a learned scholar. He was a specialist in canon law, being a Doctor *utriusque*—that is, of both civil and Church law. Not only did he know the theory, but he also had a knowledge of its practical working, as he had, I believe, been attached to the Bishop in his diocese as canonist. His Latin was a pleasure to hear, and his knowledge of the old Roman law profound. Under Padre Luigi, in place of being dry bones, as it can be, canon law became a fascinating study. Whenever possible he illustrated the principles of law from the terse epigrammatic decisions of the old Roman jurisconsults; such as *In extremis omnia communia*, to indicate that in dire necessity the laws of private ownership ceased. The

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union in Padre Luigi of profound scholarship with religious fervor served as a perfect pattern to me in the days of my own studentship, and a deep friendship was formed, which continued in the days when I was recalled to Rome and the International College.

With reference to the coming Chapter, Padre Luigi and I, by a bold decision, went to the Vatican and had a private audience with Pope Pius X. The Holy Father received us graciously in his library, lifting us up in fatherly manner when we made the customary homage of kissing his foot. The pontiff knew Padre Luigi well, but I had seen him in private audience only once before, on completing my studies and before returning to America.

He seated us, and we laid before him the whole situation in the order, Padre Luigi doing most of the talking, but saying nothing yet of our plan. I felt impatient to come to the point and blurted out: "Holy Father, the only way to save our order is to make Padre Bernardo stand for election again, or at least make him your representative in the Chapter."

He smiled benignly at this naïve impetuosity. Padre Luigi was horribly embarrassed at my precipitate petition. Such matters in Rome are carried on in a circumspect manner and in diplomatic language, especially when speaking directly to the Pope himself. In Roman diplomacy the American trait of blunt outspokenness has no place.

But the pontiff reassured Padre Luigi with outstretched palm and, turning a serious look to me, said: "I understand. I will do all in my power to help—just so this old saint Padre Bernardo doesn't deluge me with letters again to be let off!" Our cause was won!

On our journey back to the monastery Padre Luigi

complimented me on our victory. I doubt if he would ever have had the temerity to express directly and clearly the petition we had in mind, and I think he was still considerably nonplussed by my sudden seizure of the crux of the matter.

Well, the Chapter was convened. It came like a bombshell that the Pope had appointed Padre Bernardo as his special representative to preside at the sessions.

The conservatives won. Padre Pietro and his whole consulta were rejected, and Padre Geremia, a conservative, was elected in his stead, with four conservatives from different parts of the world as his consultors. Padre Luigi was elected Procurator General, a post for which he was well fitted, as this office is that of legal adviser to the General, and intermediary between the order and the Holy See.

So ended in victory my first entrance into the arena of religious politics.

The outcome toned in with one of the pleasures of life in Rome, which was meeting many of the older fathers who had spent years in the service of God and of the order. On the greater feast days of Christmas and Easter and on their own saint's day our director would take us in a body to visit the different superiors. They would entertain us with stories of the old days and sometimes give us as a memento a holy picture or medal. These pictures of the saints which were given to me were almost inevitably fated to be given up to the director at the annual retreat, when we examined ourselves thoroughly on the observance of the vow of poverty and our attachment to any objects permitted for our use.

During this second stay in Rome I came in contact with an assortment of celebrities, both within the

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Church and outside it. Who could fail to be impressed by the young, tall, good-looking, aristocratic Spanish Cardinal Merry del Val, whom Pius X had raised to the cardinalate at the early age of thirty-eight, making him Secretary of State? He spoke many languages, and so perfectly that it was hard to decide which was native to him except for the fact that he instinctively counted in English, which, if I am not mistaken, was his mother's tongue.

Merry del Val bore himself with the most perfect freedom, ease, and grace and was truly cosmopolitan. He was equally at home in the councils of the Church and the halls of diplomacy, or in the drawing-rooms of society and even, with his Cardinal's soutane tucked up about his waist, on the tennis courts. This latter activity did not meet with universal approval among his confreres.

Cardinal Gasparri, one of the most learned canonists of his day, who was engaged at that time on the monumental work of the recodification of all the multitudinous laws of the Church, was a frequent visitor at our monastery. He was not built along the graceful lines of Merry del Val, but was sturdy and rugged, as were his mind and his character. My contact with Gasparri would have led me to think that his appointment to diplomatic duties was a mistake, but I was wrong, for he proved his ability in very difficult years.

(I should have liked to be present on the occasion of the signing of the Lateran Treaty, by which peace was made between Italy and the Holy See, and the vexed Roman question brought to an end with honor and advantages to both parties. Cardinal Gasparri signed for the Pope, and Mussolini for the King of Italy. In a sense the two men were not altogether unlike; they tended to

have the same temperamentally realistic approach to things and somewhat resembled each other in rugged build.)

I was appointed Consultor to two of the Roman congregations of cardinals and took a small though active part in the complex but well-organized mechanism of the central government of the Universal Church.

The Pope, of course, is the supreme head of the Church, and is an absolute ruler, depending on no constitution. But because of the vast extent of the Church and the multitude of affairs involved in its organization, he is assisted in its administration by an elaborate system of congregations or permanent commissions of cardinals and courts. This administrative body is called the Roman Curia. There are twelve congregations, each composed of a number of cardinals, which transact the regular business of the Church according to the nature of the affairs to be acted upon.

For instance, the Congregation of the Holy Roman Inquisition, commonly called the Holy Office, has as its chief duty the defense of the purity of faith and morals of the Church. It is composed of twelve or thirteen cardinals, and to it are referred all writings suspected of heresy and all actions of the clergy that may be considered reprehensible. It is responsible also for the *Index Expurgatorius*, or list of books that Catholics are forbidden to read. The Congregation of Rites has to do with the regulation of public worship, and the canonization of saints. The Congregation of Religious concerns itself with the affairs of the religious orders. And so on.

Besides the dozen or so cardinals who compose the authoritative body of the congregations, there are numerous officials connected with each of them to carry out the routine work—counselors, secretaries, and so on.

The mass of affairs brought to a congregation is sorted out and digested by these officials and then presented to the Congress of the Cardinals for their decision, which must finally be approved by the Pope, who is the head of each congregation.

All this may be more understandable, perhaps, if I relate one of the cases in which I took part, as consultor or counsellor of the Congregation of the Council. This congregation has many duties because of the fact that it was instituted to supervise the carrying out of the many decrees of the Council of Trent, especially concerning the clergy. The case in point was one in which a priest appealed to Rome from a decision of his Bishop that removed him from what is called an irremovable rectorship. Both sides, the Bishop and the priest, prepared long documents, drawn up by canonists, or Church lawyers, to prove that right and the law of the Church were on their side. These documents found their way eventually to the proper congregation (in this case the Council), and the official in charge of appeals of this nature had full copies made of them for two consultors, who were to examine the claims exhaustively in the light of canon law and of the decrees and traditions bearing on the case.

A well-known Jesuit canonist and I were the two consultors chosen in this case. Such engagements often meant days and weeks of research and study, especially in those days before the new codification by canon law under Pius X. This particular case was complicated by the fact that the priest had functioned in a missionary country under the Congregation of Propaganda, which, with the related councils, made its laws. But at the time of the case the country's status was changing and it was being brought under the general law of the Church.

Rome generally seeks to uphold the authority of a

bishop in his diocese if it can be done legally and without injustice to others. On the face of it, however, the priest in this case seemed to have the right, and the Jesuit canonist decided in his favor in the *votum* (reviewal of the case, and a reasoned opinion or solution supported by citation of the pertinent laws) which he sent in to the congregation.

Subsequently I learned that the congregation was hoping that my *votum* would be a stronger one and would find a way of supporting the Bishop's action. I gave deep study to the whole subject of the law that affected the country of the diocese at that juncture and was able to prove convincingly that the lawyers supporting the priest's appeal were running with the hare and holding with the hounds; that is, were using the old law where it suited their case and invoking the new when it was to their advantage. I was able to cite chapter and verse to show that the Bishop was within his rights in removing the priest, when the law was applied consistently.

A summary of the facts and arguments of the case, together with the opinions offered by the canonist and myself, were printed and distributed to the cardinals composing the Congregation of the Council. These were studied by the cardinals and their assistants, and the case was finally decided in a full session of Congresso of the cardinals by their supporting the action of the Bishop and rejecting the appeal of the priest.

Naturally I felt elated at gaining a victory over a learned Jesuit, much, I suppose, as a lawyer or a prosecuting attorney feels satisfaction on winning a case irrespective of the consequences to the issues or parties involved.

Not all cases dealt with by this process are of such

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serious import. One, with another congregation, is revealing and amusing enough to invite inclusion here.

The Congregation of the Consistory, among its other functions, receives and reviews the five-yearly reports on the state of his diocese that each Bishop throughout the world must send to Rome. The voluminous reports are given to different consultors, who read and summarize them for the congregation and offer suggestions of approval, encouragement, advice, recommendations, or, if necessary, rebukes and commands to be given by the congregation to the Bishop. Thus does Rome keep informed of the state of the Church even in the remotest districts, exerting its influence and authority to prevent abuses and disorders from creeping in.

I was appointed to the Vatican as one of the consultors of the Consistory and was at different times given some of these reports from the American bishops to review.

The incident of which I speak was connected with the fact that the manner of raising money in America for the support of the priests and bishops, the building and upkeep of churches and schools, and so on, was entirely different from that in Italy and other Catholic countries, and was always looked upon with semi-disapproval by Rome. The renting of pews, for instance, was one matter that the authorities would have liked to condemn as perhaps furnishing an excuse to the poorer classes for non-attendance. Of course, no one was excluded because he could not afford to pay for a seat in church; nevertheless a discrimination was inferred that Rome did not like. Yet pew rents were a source of much-needed revenue, and the bishops upheld it as a necessary evil.

But what the cardinals were much more opposed to was the practice of the parish churches' holding bazaars,

raffles, fairs, and other such diversions as a means of raising money for the Church. What they objected to most were the dances that invariably follow these entertainments.

I remember that in my own early days in St. Louis old Father Walsh, the pastor of St. Bridget's, on the confines of the "Kerry Patch," would always attend these church bazaars where all manner of things were contributed by the parishioners to be sold or raffled or auctioned off. Later on, the dancing would begin and Father Walsh would watch the square dances for a while and then discreetly take his leave with a parting admonition: "Now, children, enjoy yourselves, but remember, no round dances," delivered with a twinkle in his eyes. Of course the good man would hardly be out of earshot when the band would strike up a gay tune and young and old would be whirling around in the wicked waltz. But at least the pastor had saved his face with Rome, declaring against this invention of the Devil to ensnare the feet and the morals of the Irish.

Some of the Eastern bishops had been able to ban these church dances, as their parishes were better provided with members who could support the church without having recourse to the questionably semicommercial ways of raising money; but the majority felt that the time had not yet arrived to conform to the stricter recommendations of Rome. They were constantly pleading that these recommendations be not turned into laws, which must be observed without question.

The incident I refer to happened at a meeting of twenty or more consultors with their reports to read and discuss with the head of the Consistorial Congregation, that old war horse and stickler for law, Cardinal DeLai. At my turn to read reports and suggestions, the old ques-

tion of church fairs and dances inevitably came up. The practice was soundly condemned by the Cardinal and by some of the consultors who were not familiar with conditions in America. My part was supported, weakly in the midst of so much violent opposition, by one Englishman, who had the same difficulty in his own country.

Forgetting my customary shyness, and the imposing presence of the stern Cardinal, I argued for the cause of the American bishops, explaining the difficulty of raising money among their generally poor congregations. Suddenly it occurred to me that I could win my point by shifting from the ground of finance to that of morals.

I pointed to the fact of the growing number of mixed marriages (between Catholics and Protestants) in America, with frequent consequent loss of faith in the Catholic party to the marriage. I reminded them of Rome's strong opposition to such marriages, and of the losses they were causing in the American Church. I argued that if the Church did not afford the means of Catholic young men and women meeting under her auspices, they would go to the public dance halls; for dance they would, and in the dance halls they faced the dangers of picking up chance acquaintances.

I felt a little smug, thinking I had carried the battle straight into hostile territory. When I sat down, a little flushed at my boldness, there was an interval of ominous silence. It was plain I had given them something to think about.

Then the tall, lean figure of Cardinal DeLai rose slowly out of his chair. Turning to me, speaking in sonorous, solemn tones, emphasizing each single word, he said: "Reverendissimo Padre Ildefonso! Jesus Christ did not establish the Holy Roman Catholic Church to become a marriage bureau!"

Notwithstanding this cold shower from His Eminence, the great DeLai, my argument did have its effect. The matter was put over, and the sword of Damocles, which had hung so close to the heads of the American bishops, was moved out of harm's way.

I had many other contacts with the governing organs of the Vatican during these years, especially with the Sacra Penitenciaria, the tribunal that deals with all cases of conscience, and grants permission to confessors to absolve from graver, reserved cases of delinquency, and from excommunication and other penalties. I had occasion to deal too with that most dreaded of all the Roman congregations, the Sacred Inquisition, or Holy Office, which, although no longer making use of medieval torture, still has powerful spiritual weapons that it does not hesitate to use against those threatening the purity of faith or morals in the Church.

One pathetic case had its climax in my time. The Church, in order to preserve inviolable the sanctity of the sacrament of penance, has passed most severe laws and penalties against priests who may be suspect of the least abuse of the intimacy of the confessional. These laws are better known in Catholic countries and are sometimes invoked for vicious motives by unworthy lay members of the Church against good priests.

This case concerned a young priest in one of our monasteries in Italy. He had been accused by a woman of having solicited her to sin, in the confessional. The mere suspicion of this greatest crime a priest can commit is sufficient to wreck his life.

Like a thunderbolt came the order from the Holy Office in Rome, forbidding this young priest ever to hear confessions again or to perform any public functions in the Church. As the secrecy of the confessional was in-

volved, he could have no trial or defense, and had no recourse or appeal from this suspension from the performance of his priestly duties. He could only say his daily Mass in private and pray. We had a phrase for such retribution; we called it being "put on the shelf."

For fifteen long years the priest lived under this black cloud, his life and his health wrecked. Slowly he went into a decline and was not far from death from tuberculosis when, on her deathbed, the woman publicly confessed that she had been in love with the priest and that, her love turned into fierce hatred by his repulsion of her advances, she had taken her revenge by falsely denouncing him to the Holy Office, knowing it would ruin his priestly career.

Although the confession came too late to save the poor priest's career or even his life, it did lift the heavy cloud of disgrace from him, and he died in happy peace, another martyr to the seal of confession that binds the lips of every priest.

Among unofficial contacts in Rome at this period, I had the invigorating pleasure of becoming friendly with the English writer Robert Hugh Benson during his several prolonged stays in Rome to preach the Lenten courses at the church for English-speaking Catholics, San Silvestro, in Capito. When it came to work, Benson was a human dynamo. He explained to me that he had a contract with his publishers to write two books a year, and that at that time he also had engagements for lectures and sermons which practically filled up his calendar for two years ahead. I am afraid it was this living and working at top speed that caused his death from angina pectoris when he was still almost in his prime.

His was a charming personality, with an eagerness for

life and an endearing simplicity of character. The impetuosity of his ideas was too great for his tongue, and he would stumble over his words. Unembarrassed, he would pass off his occasional stammering with the most engaging of smiles.

I remember how he would come down from his stint of writing, filled to the brim with boyish glee at some novel idea he had hit on for a story he was creating. Once he rushed into the room where I was, crying that he had invented a battle of airplanes for his new book —I think it was *The Lord of the World*. That was yet some years before the First World War; notwithstanding, with the exception of the great hooks with which he equipped his aircraft in order to grapple with adversary planes in close combat, everything he wrote came ingeniously and tragically true.

Several times he urged me to visit him at his home in England, and I must admit to some regret that it was out of the question. What drew me to him most, I think, was his deep interest in mystical prayer. He never tired of discussing the nature of mysticism, and while he was still a parson in the Church of England he wrote what was surely one of his most beautiful books, his *Light Invisible*.

Another great mind and mystic I came to know and revere while in Rome was Baron von Hügel. For some time it was my privilege to be the confessor of this learned, saintly, and simple man. At one time he was suspected of modernism and, I believe at the behest of Rome, suppressed or changed some of his writings. His fame was so great, however, and his goodwill, sincerity, and piety so convincing, his devotion to the Church so evident, that Rome contented itself with admonitions and did not proceed against him with severity as she did

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against so many others in her inexorable anti-modernist crusade.

The Baron united in himself the profoundest learning and depth of thought with the simplicity and beauty of soul of a saint. His insight into the nature of mysticism is shown in his biography of St. Catherine of Genoa, and in the greatest work on mysticism in the English language, von Hügel's *The Mystical Element of Religion*. But I must not allow myself to wander off into the beautiful reaches of mysticism, else my simple personal narrative will turn into a treatise on that most interesting subject, to me one most worthy of man's profoundest study.

Besides my absorbing duties in teaching and directing my students, another charge was given to me in Rome, which took up a great deal of my time and, on a good many occasions, kept me from choir at Divine Office or mental prayer. I was appointed chaplain to the Hospital of the English Blue Nuns on the Cœlian Hill near our monastery, and regular confessor to the nuns themselves.

This was a newly established order of sisters who devoted their lives to the trying work of nursing the sick. The founder was a Mother Mary, whom I came to know very well from my weekly visits to her wheelchair, from which she ruled her order, with its hospitals and convents in many different countries. She achieved a monumental work in establishing her order and building many hospitals, and had all the earmarks of a saint besides. In addition to the quiet, untiring energy that enabled her to accomplish so much, she had an unassailable peace, a universal charity and kindliness for all, a profound wisdom, and an unfaltering confidence in God,

to whom she humbly attributed all the great work she accomplished.

The order not only tended the sick in its hospital, but also went out into the homes of the people to administer their good-Samaritan services. In London, it seems, they had a home for magdalens, like the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

The hospital in Rome was built after a plan drawn by Mother Mary, which, though now used by several hospitals, was unique at that time. It was built in the form of a cross, thus ensuring light and air to all the rooms of the four wings. The intersection of the cross was a heart-shaped chapel that reached up through all the floors to the dome, thus affording those patients who so desired and were ambulatory the possibility of attending Church services in small balconies opening down into the chapel on every floor. Mother Mary often said that she wanted the chapel with its reserved sacrament to be the heart of the hospital.

The staff included some of the leading doctors of the city, who enjoyed operating at the English Hospital, as it was called, because of the excellent modern facilities of the operating-room and the skilled attendance of the nuns.

In one wing of the building was a training school for nurses, where the nuns and lay nurses studied and received their diplomas.

One afternoon a week I would hear the confessions of the nuns, and on Saturday those of the lay nurses and of quite a number of the English-speaking Catholics of Rome. Beside these regular duties I visited the patients in their rooms, heard their confessions, and prepared for death the extreme cases, administering the last sacraments.

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When the patient belonged to an Italian family, I ran almost invariably into difficulties. I am afraid the Italians, through long familiarity with the Church and its ceremonies, are somewhat inclined to take their religion casually for granted. One of our old monks used to say that the average Italian went to church three times in his lifetime: once when he was brought there to be baptized, again when he was married, and finally when his body was carried to the funeral service.

However this may have been, I recall that usually the relatives of a gravely ill person did everything in their power to keep me from the bedside of a loved one. To them the visit of the priest meant death, and they wanted desperately for the dying person not to realize that the end was near. "*Fa impressione,*" they would argue with me; but as soon as the patient had lapsed into unconsciousness they would rush to get me to administer extreme unction, so that their dear one should have the benefit of the Church's blessing in his last passage. They seemed to think that by some magic the anointing oil would ensure a happy end. They did not realize that the Church lays stress on the last confession and sincere final repentance, having little faith in the efficacy, as a passport to heaven, of the last rites administered to an unconscious person. Alas, human nature always hopes for some magic cure for its mistakes, much as the child runs to its mother for the magic kiss to heal the hurt.

Among non-Catholics there is widespread belief that girls enter a convent to become nuns because they have been disappointed in love. It would scarcely be relevant to this narrative to debate questions of wisdom, naturalness, and so on, in girls forgoing the joy of human love and motherhood for the ideals and self-denial of the re-

ligious life. I have wished here rather to recount a continuity of facts than to discuss theories; to draw a picture of a life directed by the memory and faith of the Passion of Christ and the incentive to expanding search for reality.

Out of experience as convent confessor and director, knowing the life stories of hundreds of nuns, I can testify that, with rare exceptions, the girl who enters a convent does so in the first flush and enthusiasm of her emotional life, moved by the religious ideas that have been part of her thinking and feeling from her earliest years. The Catholic girl who in her youth decides to dedicate her life to God as a religious is motivated by high and noble purpose clearly based on her faith. In the majority of cases her "vocation" is her first love, often cherished in her sacred heart for years. In her youthful idealism nothing less than the highest will satisfy her. That is why the Catholic orders usually get the very best type of young men and women, those capable of great idealism and the courage to forego the attractions of human happiness for a life of sacrifice in the service of God and of humanity.

There is nothing the least bit morbid or unnatural in this impulse. If there is a tinge of sadness in some hearts at seeing a beautiful, fresh young girl in the first bloom of womanhood leaving home, family, and friends to immure herself, especially when it is in one of the strictly cloistered orders, rest assured that there is nothing but a glad song in her own heart as the time arrives for her divine espousal.

But, some will inquire, does she not become disillusioned and unhappy when that first youthful enthusiasm is past? No. Her faith maintains her action; she cherishes her vocation and privilege of being the "bride of Christ"

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above all earthly honors, and partakes of the joy and peace of life in immensely greater degree than her sisters "in the world."

Convents are not gloomy places, nor are they prisons. They are happy, often gay, homes where normal women lead full and contented lives. I met despondency at lack of progress in the spiritual life; I met honest weaknesses, such as envy, ambition, vainglory; but only in very rare instances have I encountered doubt of vocation or regret for having embraced the religious life. When it does occur, proving to be more than a passing discouragement, the wise director advises the obtaining of a dispensation of vows and a return to the world.

It is a supremely difficult decision for a nun to make. There is present a sense of failure, the dread of being unfaithful to a vocation, even a reluctance to meet the probable hostile criticism of relatives, for in the eyes of Catholics a certain stigma seems always to hover over one who leaves the convent after the taking of vows. Yet dispensation is the common-sense course, for the individual and for the order.

The Blue Nuns, on the Cœlian Hill, were a happy lot, and it was a joy to direct them.

As for the monks in the stricter orders, the life is too austere and the sops offered to human nature too few for any man to remain long in the cloister after he has lost the spirit of his vocation. One finds occasional lapses from virtue, but they are the rare exception and not, as many seem determined to believe, the rule. After spending years as confessor and director of priests, monks, and nuns, I bear willing testimony to their high character and earnestness, even though at times human nature may offer incidental tussles. My work as consultor to the congregations of cardinals which ruled the Church, to which

come knowledge of all failures and defections of priests and religious throughout the world, leaves me in no question whatever that the priesthood of the Catholic Church, and I infer the ministry of the other churches, in the vast majority is made up of men who began their ministry with high and noble ideals and are striving to live up to them in the midst of the many temptations of a pleasure-loving world. The saints are comparatively few. But so, too, are the sinners.

The work of being chaplain to the nuns and to the hospital cut rather deeply into my time, depriving me of much of the seclusion that had hitherto constituted my monastic life. This fact, and my absorption in the deeper studies required by the teaching of St. Thomas, often found my little bugia burning late into the night, and the consequent loss of time for mental prayer and other primary monastic duties was of some concern to me. And still there was no consciousness of any dread disease lurking in my soul.

At the end of five years of teaching, preaching, and the other work entailed by being consultor of the congregations and chaplain to the hospital and several convents besides that of the Blue Nuns, I was called back to America for different work.

XI

In view of my rather strenuous labors in Rome, our General, Padre Geremia, kindly permitted me to return to my own province by way of the rest of Europe instead of going direct from Naples to New York. Knowing that the nine years I had spent altogether in the Holy City had also given me an enthusiastic appreciation of the great art collections, he also allowed for my having time to see the principal collections in other cities across Europe.

Before leaving, I had the privilege and pleasure of a farewell private audience with Pope Pius X. I had formed a clear impression of this truly saintly man and great pontiff, possessed of a holy and reforming spirit. This last visit served to deepen my love and admiration for him. I was filled with reverence for the good he was accomplishing in reforming and reorganizing the Church, and for two very significant long-range projects which, if he never did anything else, it seemed to me would ensure his fame in future generations. These were the much-needed codification of canon law, and the Biblical Commission, to re-examine and collate all the known versions and manuscripts of the Bible, in order to prepare a new text of the Scriptures that would utilize all the discoveries of modern criticism and give as perfect a version as was humanly possible.

Besides these great achievements he was reorganizing

and making more efficient the Sacred Congregations, not hesitating to remove from their dioceses any bishops who were negligent of their flocks and to abolish some smaller seminaries as being useless for the training of priests, in reality because they had degenerated deplorably into breeding-places for heretical ideas.

But it seemed to me that Pius X would be remembered most for his prompt and masterful action in stamping out the dragon of modernism in the Church. He had a raging zeal for the purity of the faith and held no measure too stern to use in preserving it.

And yet in personality he was the most humble of men. It was that quality which lingered in my mind after this last interview. My own father could not have been more gracious, kind, and interested in my future work. The husky voice bespoke the most earnest conviction as he uttered his words of loving conviction and imparted to me the authority to carry his papal blessing to my dear ones at home. He invited me to name them individually, and as I did he said: "*Sì, sì, la benedizione di Dio per tutti, tutti.*"

My journey back to the United States was circuitous, a benefaction as unexpected as it was entirely outside the bond made with God when I dedicated myself to His service. It was, as it were, an extra dividend beyond the regular happiness and contentment that the monastic life yielded.

It was a joy to plan getting into the two or three months allowed me as many of the celebrated museums and galleries of Europe as possible, at the same time not straining the monastic purse unduly. Cook's man was nonplussed by my insistence on the one hand that I must economize strictly but, on the other hand, that Munich and Madrid must not be left out of the tour,

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even if it did mean a long side-trip from Paris to Spain. It took me weeks even to get out of Italy, with her inestimable wealth of art treasures. In each city I longed for as many years as I had had in Rome, for architecture especially had become for me a source of pure joy; a line, an arch, a façade, a vaulting could fill me with as much exhilaration as my first bottle of wine in the monastery refectory.

I had learned by this time to recognize characteristics of the style of various masters. Seeing their works in so many different collections was like meeting old friends. Florence, Bologna, Milan, Venice, Pisa, Padua, with their palaces, museums, churches, and galleries, set before me a feast with which I could never become sated. Of all the cities of the world, I enjoyed Venice most. Not a town in Italy, however, but had its treasures; sometimes the surprise of finding in some out-of-the-way village an unheralded masterpiece was as great as the joy in beholding it.

Gradually I came to feel that if I must choose among so many friends, my favorite must be Giotto. I came almost to love him as a brother, as I felt his soul must have partaken of that simplicity, freedom, ease, and grace which shine forth in nearly every line of his frescoes. This magic of picturing the soul with a few simple brushstrokes stands out, to me, as something unattained by any of his more renowned successors, notwithstanding their highly developed technique, knowledge of the laws of perspective, and skill in chiaroscuro, enabling them to create the illusion and depth of the third demension. To me, Giotto and Masaccio are the grandfather and father of modern painting; Leonardo, Raffaello, and Michelangelo their talented children. Of course the reader will understand I speak not as an artist,

which I am not, but as a layman, claiming the privilege of enjoying beauty as it impresses him, rules and critics aside.

Unembarrassed by the pronouncements of critics, I allowed myself to relish the ragamuffins and Madonnas of Murillo as well as the more respected masterpieces of El Greco and the magnificent canvases of Velásquez, king of the Spanish artists.

Toledo in Spain, destined to lie in ruins, laid a special claim on me as being the see of my patron, St. Ildefonso. Like many of the out-of-the-way towns, it was almost an open-air museum, where one could wander through the streets in the illusion of living centuries distant.

I paid homage to my saint in the Chapel dedicated to him in the grand Cathedral, and visited the Alcázar. It was in either Toledo or Madrid, I cannot recall which, that I attended a military Mass, where the cadets of the military college with their officers in full regalia worshipped God around an altar set up in the huge courtyard that served as the drill field. It did not then strike me as anomalous, although as the scene comes back to me it seems that when arms and religion are joined it is an unholy wedlock. I wonder how long it will take the human race to reach the age of reason, how long before killing and destruction will become as unthinkable as the tortures of the Inquisition.

In the Spaniards I sensed a dignity and nobility of fiber that, though somewhat barbaric in its primitiveness, set them apart from other Latin races. Perhaps it was the strain of the Moor, which had left so great an impress also on their culture and their customs.

I stayed barely a couple of days in Switzerland, being more on the trail of art than of nature. Although I admired the art of the north, with its Rubenses and its

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Rembrandts, it did not touch my soul as did the art of the emotional south, with its warmer, more human appeal. As far as art of all kinds was concerned, I think the Celt in me won out over the Teuton. My friends pitied me when I confessed naïvely to being more moved by the sextet from *Lucia* or melodies of Verdi than by the symphonies of Beethoven with their more complicated harmony. I loved my old, stuffy, sentimental Italians, as though each work had been done expressly for me, just as I love God's handiwork in nature as if it were a direct and personal gift to me.

XII

Back in America I was put to teaching again, in the new provincial house at Norwood Park, on the Northwestern railroad outside of Chicago. It was good for my soul to get back to the regular observance of the rule, away from the many too distracting duties of my life in Rome. My own experience suggested the thought that superiors are wise indeed when they take special care of their good monks. In the press of demand for missionaries and other laborers in the vineyard it is sometimes a temptation, overlooking the welfare of the individual priest, to put upon him more distracting work than is good for his soul.

The life of the monk, with its self-abnegation and hardships, is never indigenous to human nature, and consequently needs the constant nourishment of prayer and seclusion within the protecting walls of the cloister garden. The flowers of virtue and recollection and devotion are easily blighted by the exotic winds forever blowing from the desert of the world. In my own case if there was any slight lessening of my original enthusiasm, it might have been attributable to my necessary journeys outside the monastery, and the many activities that brought me into greater contact with the outside world. Or is enthusiasm a characteristic only of youth?

One incident that comes to memory will illustrate the

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necessity of being vigilant, lest slackened fervor be touched off by the most fleeting incidents.

I was preparing to retire one night when I heard music seemingly from near by. I looked out the window and saw a garden party in progress, evidently got up by the pastor for the parishioners of the monastery church. There was dancing on the lawn and, against the light, I caught a glimpse of a woman's form in diaphanous attire. Instinctively I turned away, and so far no harm was done. But—and here is where the "Old Boy" got in his work!—I took another, momentary look.

Of course I hastened off in search of my confessor and avowed my sin, not wanting to spend the night in what might have been a deliberate violation of my vow of chastity, and therefore a mortal sin. But the point I make is that that second glance would have been utterly impossible before my freer Roman days. Some sort of weakening must have been occasioned in my spiritual life by the multiplicity of my occupations, and the consequent shortening of my nourishing hours of prayer.

In the monastery at this time was an older priest of German descent, a Father Mark, who had one of the best and most methodical minds in the province. He gave the priests of the community, myself included, a sort of postgraduate course in sermon-writing.

I can see his short, plump body and massive head as he drilled us over and over in his special hobby of making every discourse a perfectly logical unit. The exordium, with its fundamental proposition, its *transitus* and *reditus* and final introduction of the theme or thesis, must be a perfect build-up for the body of the lecture itself. Nothing extraneous must be used, lest the minds of the hearers wander off into byways of thought. The arguments must

be cumulative, each at its conclusion driving nearer and nearer home the purpose of the sermon until, arriving at the peroration, the emotional appeal was used with as much eloquence as one was capable of, to persuade the will to put in practice that of which, if the arguments were sound, the mind had already become convinced.

This perfect structure or skeleton of a discourse I found of immense benefit to me in my own lecturing and preaching, even though it did smack somewhat of German rigidity. But we learned that, with skill, one need not let the bones protrude!

The course given us by Padre Mark had the further effect of putting an end to all writing on my part, because the ease with which I found I could develop a theme, with this orderly sketch in mind, gave me an excellent excuse to forgo the hours of labor required to write out a persuasive lecture. Besides, I found out that I could think up more human and convincing arguments with the stimulation of an audience before me, giving them fresher, warmer expression than I could sitting in the emotionless environment of my desk.

At least so I convinced myself, and soon the pen, for me, came to be an almost unused instrument. It was a mistake. Using one's own pen to give expression to original thinking is a worth-while activity, an exercise in bringing one's own thought to bear on the problems of life, as far as possible unbiased by the traditions and conventions of external environment.

It was a fact that, up to the age of forty, I was never once to bring any question nakedly before my native mind, asking myself what *I* really thought about it. I accepted unquestioningly the traditions of the past, the beliefs of my forefathers and my teachers, and the phi-

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losophy best suited to ready-made, accepted traditions. Naturally I imagined I was thinking profoundly, going to the very foundations of human knowledge. Actually I was interpreting life and my experience, not in my own idiom, but in the terms of the thought and belief of others.

It is a common situation. Do we not accept our ideas of politics, economics, religion or lack of it, ready-made from our ancestors and our environment? The men most full of knowledge are all too often the least original. We are Democrats or Republicans, Catholics or Protestants, because we are so born or reared, not because we have studied the principles of economics or of faith, or have given our own deep native thought to the questions involved. Because of this we frequently ostracize and persecute the rare original thinker who experiences the illuminating flash of truth that goes counter to accepted theories. Examples of this are legion in history.

It is almost impossible to convince a man of this until some awakening of his own soul reveals to him the fact that he has been living in a world created for him and not by him. Was it Emerson who said that no man is really cultured until he has evolved his own philosophy? I would go further and say that a man is not really cultured until he has discarded all philosophy, for it is not so much a matter of having a complete explanation of life as it is of obtaining a deep realization, a tasting, a feeling of the fundamental mysteriousness of existence, that shapes a man's own philosophy. Once we have attained our own, we have little use for the pocket-edition solutions offered on every side. We shall comprehend that life is a great and deep personal adventure, in some inexplicable way rooted in the eternal nature of being

itself, and offering us continued and unlimited opportunities to open ourselves ever more and more fully to that surely infinite reality of which we form a part.

In these depths of realization true religion and wisdom are born and have little relation to the surface activities of the inquiring intellect in formulating philosophies and creeds. From these same depths surely come all the great permanent achievements of man, the deeper insights of the philosopher, the enduring songs of the poets, the revealing vision that produces the masterpieces of the artist and musician and, to my mind highest of all, the snatches of vision of another world which the mystic obtains in his exalted moments of "union with God." I believe that until a man attains to this wisdom he is hardly human, his life has no dignity or depth, his love remains a thing of the earth and soon withers, and his religion becomes a matter of beliefs and forms and cannot lead him to God.

I have often found wisdom in the unlearned, often missed it in the scholar. It is a thing of the soul, not of the mind. With it a man is alive and grows; without it he is still in the womb of nature waiting to be born. Like the fruit of the tree, I think it comes from the abundant flow of life through us. Opening ourselves fully to the life and the joy and the sorrow of today brings that unfolding which makes it possible for God to reveal himself the more, day by day. Closing our minds and hearts to life, to truth, beauty, and love, cuts off the sunshine and the growth and fruition of our being.

During these couple of years in the States I was employed a great deal of the time in giving retreats to nuns, preaching sermons, giving Lenten courses, and doing other general work of the priest.

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On one occasion, while substituting as parish priest for a pastor who was in the hospital undergoing an operation for cancer of the jaw, I met the famous surgeon Dr. Thomas Murphy, of Chicago. I went to him to find out if cancer was contagious, and if there were any precautions that I should take, therefore, in living in the parish house, using the furniture of the priest, and so on.

He convinced me that there was nothing to fear, by the startling method of relating the rather unnerving but convincing proof given a class by his old professor in medical school. Cutting open his arm the professor inserted and sewed up in the wound a cancerous growth, taken from a patient. My mind was forever set at rest as to my question.

A few months after my return from Rome I was elected rector or superior of the new monastery at St. Paul, Kansas. I had never before been in charge of a whole community and had some misgivings. Evidently these matched those of the provincial, Father Jerome, and his two consultors, who had chosen me.

After deciding on my election they called me in and told me that the one doubt that arose during their deliberations was whether my kindly nature would be equal to maintaining strict discipline in the community. "I will do my best," I replied, "but I shall only be able to do it in my own way. You see, I believe in the proverb of St. Francis de Sales, that you can catch more flies with an ounce of honey than with a barrel of vinegar. Nor do I believe that loving-kindness and discipline are incompatible."

Although the new monastery was not yet completed, it was far enough along to be occupied, but a certain amount of business with the builders was left to me to

finish. The Passionists had been in St. Paul (Kansas) for a number of years, living in a stone building that had been a Jesuit college in the days when the village was named Ossage Mission and was a center of education for the Indians. The Jesuits decided to concentrate their energies elsewhere, so we had been invited by the Bishop of Wichita to send a community to the old college. It was not long before we had to tear down the ancient stone structure as unsuitable for our purpose and unsafe.

The new monastery was of brick, up-to-date and comfortable. Attached to it was a large parish church, and some hundreds of acres of farm land. It was a perfect place for a monastery, away from the distractions and noise of a city, and with large grounds for the healthful exercise of the monks. The climate of Kansas and the flatness of the country—certainly no one could call them salubrious—gave the monastery the name of Siberia in the province, and thither the higher superiors would occasionally send a monk who had shown too great a liking for the society of the world.

We installed a Diesel engine and dynamo with a large storage battery to provide the first electricity the town had ever known, which stimulated the villagers later to put up a municipal plant of their own.

As rector I was officially pastor, too, of the adjoining church, although this entailed but little active parish work outside of the responsibility and supervision involved, as another priest was charged with the duties of parish priest. In small towns the life of the monks is a subject of curiosity and speculation, and at times I had difficulty in keeping parochial affairs from intruding on monastic seclusion. But I must own that the monks knew almost as much about the affairs of the town and

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outlying farms, discussing them with as lively interest, as the townsfolk knew of affairs in the monastery. Through careless visiting on walks (it became an abuse that I had to try to stop) and chance meetings with neighbors, the more talented gossipers discovered enough about our family affairs to let them know that monks are human, not all saints. I came to like the simple, kindly country-folk myself, but I suspect I was not a rector entirely to their taste. I had not acquired the fine art of easy social manners and never visited them in their homes; moreover, I did my best to keep the other monks from distracting contacts with them.

The duties of rector in the monastery itself are mostly supervisory, as the duties of the different officers and lay brothers are so well defined by the rule that little personal attention need be given to them. The raising of money to meet the expenses of the community sometimes causes anxiety to the rector, but in my case even that never became serious. The two main sources of income to our monasteries were the stipends for the Masses celebrated daily by the priests, and the remuneration received by the missionary priests for their services in the parishes where they conducted missions.

A mission is a course of revival sermons, preached for from one to four weeks, according to the size of the parish. Some parish priests hold missions every year or two, some less frequently. They call in from one of the preaching or missionary orders two or more priests to conduct the mission. The object is to renew the fervor of the Catholics and to bring back those who are beginning to neglect their religious duties.

These revivals are made a great event in a parish and are generally very well attended, especially if the missionaries are eloquent preachers. There are several discourses

a day, including instructions in the faith and on the special duties of different classes of people, such as talks to the children, to the young men and women, and to the married men and women, each in their separate groups.

The *pièce de résistance* is the rousing sermon in the evening by the ranking orator, on such subjects as Sin, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven. These sermons are calculated to put the fear of God into the faithful and to bring them back to the straight and narrow path. The emotional appeal made by an eloquent speaker is sometimes tremendous, and results in many being converted to the faith, backsliders returning to the practice of their religion, and a general renewal of faith and fervor in the parish.

For long hours of the day and often up to midnight the confessionals are besieged. From the priests' point of view this is the most exhausting part of the work, as it is no easy task to sit four or five hours at a stretch with one's faculties ever alert, listening to tales of woe, sin, and sorrow, and advising, remonstrating, encouraging, until one is fairly ready to drop from sheer fatigue. At the same time, to the enthusiastic missionary this is the most consoling part of the mission, for he feels that his labors are bearing fruit.

On his return to the monastery he will tell the students of the "big fish" caught. In a preacher's parlance a fish is a person who has been away from the sacraments for a long time, and his size is reckoned in the years—five, ten, thirty, or whatever—away from his religious duties. I am afraid I must admit that the angler's time-honored tendency to exaggeration was not always avoided by these priestly fishers of men.

The rector of the monastery, compelled to think of

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the material as well as the spiritual well-being of his community, was perforce interested in the size of the check brought back by these homing missionaries rather than in the precise size of the fish caught. The customary minimum was fifty dollars a week for each priest, but often the parish priest, warmed by the successful fruits of the mission, would be more generous in his donation, especially in larger parishes and when the more renowned orators conducted the missions.

A third source of revenue for the monastery was gifts made by more or less wealthy Catholics to the order or to individual priests, which, of course, were turned over to the rector. I recall a case of my own in Rome when a friend, Lady Mary Fitzgerald, placed a fat envelope in my hand which turned out to contain twenty-five thousand lire, a sum equivalent then to five thousand dollars. The General was appropriately grateful, for there were always the poorer communities, requiring help from headquarters.

Were there no bad monks in the monastery?

I can reduce the answer to succinct brevity: not for long!

Very occasionally, for one reason or another, a priest or lay brother would lose the spirit of his vocation and grow noticeably negligent in the observance of the rule. This would constitute the patiently awaited opening the Devil wanted, and it would be comparatively easy for him to lead the monk to the commission of deeds that would cause his expulsion, or make the burden of his monastic life so heavy that he would of his own accord return to the world. The monastic life is too hard on human nature, the privations too great, and the rewards in the human meaning of the term too few for a monk

to stay long in the cloister after his original fervor and purpose have been lost. I recall a few instances wherein this process of disintegration consumed a longer period of time, but they tended to be found among priests who, being largely engaged in giving missions, were spared to a great extent the austerities of the community life and who experienced the thrill of moving large audiences and the distractions of more worldly surroundings and better living in the parish house where they resided for the duration of the mission.

These cases may cause considerable stir among those who know about them, but fortunately they seldom become generally known either within or outside the monastery. The Church very naturally hates the exposure to the public gaze of any seamy side of her garments. Nor can any good possibly come from any airing of incidents, happily rare, for it would only tend to convince the skeptical of that utter falsity, that the so-called unnatural life of priests and religious finds compensations in dark and hidden ways. Most of all, it would be unfair to the Church and to the large and faithful body of men and women who are wholeheartedly fulfilling their obligations and keeping their vows in the noble and useful work to which they have devoted their lives. To judge the whole by the infinitesimal percentage of failures is an injustice committed by careless enemies of religion and of the Church. However much many may disagree with the Catholic Church and her inherent methods, she stands uncompromisingly for right and morality as she conceives them; as an institution she should therefore be encouraged, not defamed. She fights a good fight against enemies from without and corruption from within, and long after the Borgias and the scandals have been for-

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gotten, history will remember her saints, her mysticism, her aspiration, and her beauty.

In the spring of 1914, while still rector of the monastery in Kansas, I received a cablegram from Rome announcing my election, at the General Chapter then in session, to the office of Consultor General of the Order. This is the second highest office in the order, the general being the head.

I was only thirty-eight years of age, and this was big and unexpected news. The consultor, or assistant general, is usually chosen among the older, more experienced members of the order, after long years of service in successive offices. I was human enough to feel a certain elation over the bestowal upon me of such an honor and at the prospect of returning to Rome under such favorable circumstances, for the consultor-generalship, while a high office, entailed none of the smaller individual worries and duties that were joined with every other superiority in the order. There would be no responsibility for the welfare and behavior of the individuals under one's jurisdiction, as was the lot of a director of students or the rector of a monastery. My duties would be more of an advisory nature, as the general and his four consultors, his cabinet as it were, formed the executive body that ruled the order. I would be consulted and would render my vote in all important matters pertaining to governing the order, but would have none of that detail work involving harassing decisions and the giving of orders, which I never found easy.

I received many letters of congratulation from my friends in the different monasteries and was invited by the rectors to visit them on my journey to take up my

new duties. I was my own superior now and needed no one's permission to accept these invitations. I decided to stop off at St. Louis to say good-by to my old mother, and at Louisville to see the new novitiate, just built for the Western Province.

I stayed a day or two with my mother, and then said a last good-by to her. My term of office was to be six years; she was already in her seventies and she really knew this time that she could hardly expect to see me again.

She brought up the subject of her will. She told me that she intended to leave everything she had to the monastery, as my brother would always have enough from his parish to live on, and she did not believe it good for a secular priest to have more money than he needed for bare necessities. I felt that this arrangement might hurt him, her favorite son, and begged her to remember in time, as she would not want any bitterness after her death. The thought had never occurred to her, nor that it would make any difference to either of us really how she disposed of her property. She saw the point, however, and followed my advice not to leave any will at all.

My father had died a year or two before, at the age of about seventy-six. He had been knocked down by an automobile as he was crossing the street, and his hip-bone fractured. The bone would not knit at his age, and he was an invalid in a wheelchair for six months. In his last days on earth his stalwart honesty showed itself. There was a sliver of doubt in his mind as to where responsibility for the accident lay, so he took it upon himself, exonerating the driver and thus ruling out any possibility of a claim for damages. My mother nursed him tenderly during the dragging weeks of his incapacitation.

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I was permitted once or twice in that time to visit him, but when pneumonia supervened as a delayed result of the shock of the accident, I was not present.

My superiors allowed me to go down from Chicago for the funeral. As my father had been a leading Catholic layman of St. Louis, a great concourse of laymen and priests attended the funeral in the parish church. My brother and I said our Masses for Father at the two side-altars while the solemn requiem was being celebrated at the high altar, with the sanctuary crowded with priests. The unusual event of two sons reading Mass at their father's funeral seemed a moving sight to the congregation. Religion had been his mainstay in life, and he deserved from his Church whatever sad splendor and recognition she could give him in death.

My mother felt this last great blow that life had dealt her more perhaps than we realized at the time. The two had shared life closely for well over fifty years of joys and sorrows, and the home and her own life must have seemed empty indeed now that he was gone. It was poignant to me to remember how often in earlier years, with her characteristic self-sacrifice and compassion, she had said wistfully that she hoped she would be the one to bear the suffering of separation and loneliness, and not he. They had found happiness and strength and comfort in each other during a long life that held many consolations, many reverses and deep sorrows, many triumphs of simple faith and deep piety. How could I but feel the profoundest of reverence and love for the two who had brought me into the world, showered me with love, and by their lives given me a shining example of uprightness and noble living? How also could I not esteem the religion that formed the core of those lives, furnishing them inspiration and courage and comfort, especially in the

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dark days of sorrow when no human consolation is able to assuage the heartache and despair brought by separation from loved ones?

Religion told them there was a deeper reason for sufferings, which we are not always given to see, and a meeting-place arranged beyond the grave. Thus their sorrow was not turned into the bitter hopelessness of despair, which those must experience who have no faith. They had their Father in heaven to turn to for comfort, even though His hand seemed at times to lie heavily upon them. Their "Thy will be done" brought grace and peace to their suffering souls, for they knew beyond all doubt that somehow their pain had a larger reason, and was necessary, and would bear its fruit in time.

XIII

I left New York to take up my duties in Rome as Consultor General in July 1914. By the time I arrived in England, the World War had begun in Europe.

Immediate passage to Italy was out of the question because of the utter confusion caused by the suddenness of war's outbreak, and I went to our monastery at St. Joseph's, on Highgate Hill. I was received with great kindness by Father Philip, the provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province, and one of the most learned and cultured men of the order at that time.

There was a note of special respect in the welcome I received from the religious of St. Joseph's, called forth, of course, by my high office. The ruthless common sense of the Irish in me prevented my taking it personally.

As I awaited the opportunity to continue my journey, Father Philip asked me to use my time in visiting the different monasteries of his province, so that I might become acquainted with the monks and the conditions of the work of the order in England and Ireland. As I was to be the representative in Rome of the English-speaking provinces of the order, I was glad of the opportunity and over a period of two or three weeks sped on a round of visits to the monasteries of England, Ireland, and Wales.

In the course of visiting our monastery at Broadway in Worcestershire, among the beautiful Cotswold Hills, I had the pleasant experience of meeting the talented

American actress Mary Anderson, then Madame de Navarro, who had her English home in the region. She had turned the gabled top story of her house into a private chapel, and I was invited to come and say Mass there. At breakfast after Mass I met her husband and two handsome sons. She had been retired from the stage for some years, but her great beauty was still striking and she possessed uncommon magnetism and charm.

She was engaged in the interesting task of collaborating with Robert Hichens on a dramatization of his novel *The Garden of Allah*, which they were to put on at Covent Garden. She herself was building a group of miniature stage settings calculated to bring the beauty of the story into relief, believing that it owed as much of its charm to the desert and monastic background as to the soul struggles of the main characters.

There was a great deal of discussion about the denouement of the story. As a good Catholic, I, though knowing nothing about romantic love from personal experience, stood up for the ending as Hichens had written it, feeling certain that the monk's vocation would have triumphed. Miss Anderson agreed with me, with a faint smile that I did not then think much about; perhaps she had some reservation about so positive a view in one so ignorant as I with respect to some aspects of human living.

The chatelaine of this beautiful old house showed me her collection of pewter, which was evidently reckoned as one of the finest collections in England.

"Tell me," she said, "you're very young to be Consultor General, aren't you? Doesn't it make you feel very swanky?"

I sensed that swanky must be English slang for a chest-out feeling of elation. A good monk would not allow himself to harbor that kind of feeling. But when I dis-

claimed it Miss Anderson laughed indulgently. Alas, I was apt to share the hopelessly comical inability of Oliver Goldsmith, who in the presence of ladies could never toss off brilliant bits of repartee, although when he was once more alone he could think of all manner of sparkling witticisms.

At last I was able to get passage across the Channel to France. But then I was obliged to wait again, a week or more in Paris, before receiving permission to continue my journey to Rome. Few passenger trains were moving in France, which was in the throes and confusion of mobilization, with troops and matériel converging from all over the country toward Belgium.

To my amazement, I learned that spies had no scruples against dressing as priests to conceal their identity and activities, and during my enforced stay in darkened Paris I was challenged often by the police, who were not at all sure of me, merely because I wore the Roman collar.

It was the first time I had needed a passport to travel anywhere in Europe. Now I had to have one in my pocket at all times in order instantly to be able to prove my citizenship. In a sense all this questioning was a symbol, which saddened me immeasurably. Would we never be rid again of the suspicions and barbarous hatreds expressed by the regulations of frontiers, the reluctantly granted visas and passports?

Finally I was told that I could leave Paris, although no assurance was given me that I would reach the Swiss border at any given time. We were jammed into a poorly equipped train, which, being continually and monotonously sidetracked, sometimes for hours, to permit troop and munitions trains to pass, made a snail's progress. Toward night we were stopped at a small town and of-

ficials shouted that the train would proceed no farther that day, and we must find accommodations in the village as best we could.

Originally I thought I would beguile the time by an impromptu lesson in geography. Later, when peace was restored, it would be interesting to count over by name the towns and villages I would perhaps never have heard of had we not been stopped in them by the unrolling machine of war. But soon all the starts and stops, and the roaring of officials, who often did not seem themselves to know where they were, created such a haze of confusion for the wretched passengers that the memory refused, like a weary hunter at the prospect of one more jump.

Finally we were flung across the Swiss frontier with an air of great good riddance, and it was like being in another world altogether. No unscheduled starts and stops, no harassed officials, no warnings of war; only an almost dreamlike journey in peace and quiet to Rome.

I was joyfully welcomed by many old friends and made aware at once of the respect for my new office. The priests, students, and lay brothers knelt to kiss my hand in the salutation reserved by custom for higher superiors, and the General and my three fellow consultors embraced me with affection.

I was given a cell in the wing reserved for the Consulta, as the General and his four assistants are called when considered as the governing body of the order. The cell was as poor and bare as all the other cells, but slightly larger. The wing contained a convenience, however, that had been the cause of much misgiving and condemnation on the part of the older and more conservative monks.

My predecessor in office, Father Joseph, was an American and therefore not accustomed to the primitiveness of Italian monastic plumbing. This old monastery of Sts. John and Paul was many hundreds of years old and, notwithstanding that it contained a hundred cells, had only one bathroom. Its other toilet facilities were correspondingly medieval. There was no hot water anywhere except in the kitchen. The taking of a bath was a rare and complicated process in our one bathroom. If one hoped for the luxury of a hot bath, it was necessary to build a fire of fagots under a great copper boiler.

Washing the feet was a fairly common necessity, because we wore sandals. This function was performed in a corner set apart in the large kitchen for the purpose. We could draw a large basin of hot water, retire to our corner and, with the aid of half a brick in lieu of soap, and a scrub-brush, scour our feet. This delicate undertaking was rather painful in winter, when the cold inevitably caused the skin to crack.

When Father Joseph met these conditions, after being used to the modern facilities of American monasteries, he got permission from the General to install in the wing of the Consulta, for the exclusive use of the higher superiors, a modern bathroom, with a geyser for hot water, a foot-tub, porcelain bath, and so forth. This unheard-of innovation and luxury was the cause of much criticism by the community, many of whom thought it a worldly concession to human softness, and the direct work of Satan himself. Some of the superiors went so far as to refuse to make use of this diabolical American importation.

A couple of years later Father Joseph was found dead from a heart attack in this bathroom of which he had been sole promoter and principal user. In the minds of

some of the monks there was no doubt whatever that it was a judgment of God, in condemnation of a relaxation of the traditional vigor of the rule.

I must admit that I appreciated the privilege of making use of "Father Joseph's Folly," as it was called, but so far as material comfort was concerned, it was the only privilege my new position as Consultor General gave me. The higher superiors were expected to be perfection itself in faithful observance of the rule.

In this post my duties were somewhat enlarged; they were more comprehensive variations of my earlier work as consultor. I had much more to do with the broad world of officialdom in the Vatican, and correspondingly less time for the solitary life of the monk. This brought me both losses and gains. I had a natural pull toward contemplation and mental prayer; when I had sought admission to the order, I envisioned a lifetime completely devoted to solitude with God. Therefore I felt the diminution of that kind of life, because of other and more gregarious duties for which my superiors had seen fit to select me.

On the other hand I felt the benefits of enlarged experience in the many and divers aspects of the problems and aims of the Universal Church. So altogether my days were full and satisfying, if not in the exact way I had anticipated when I became a monk. And there was no point at which I could not say, wholeheartedly: "Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done."

As I have said earlier, the Passionist monk's life is based on the premise that he can only bring spiritual relief and understanding into a discordant world if he himself has found peace. There is indeed something to be said for the premise. A man may spend his whole se-

cluded life in the search and discovery of one new scientific truth—as did the Curies, for instance—and be hailed as a benefactor of the race. His life of seclusion and devotion to knowledge is justified in the eyes of men, even though his dedication of himself to science entails his being deprived of many of the comforts, amenities, and rewards of human society. The very concentration required for the attainment of his goal often makes demands on the enthusiastic searcher for truth as rigorous and as ascetic as are those voluntarily assumed by the monk for the attainment of his end. But he becomes so engrossed by their goals that the hardships of the road dwindle into nothingness. To fix one's attention on the hardships alone, therefore, is to miss the whole meaning of the man's life.

On the supposition that religion has a value for human life and society, the monk's enthusiasm in devoting himself to it wholeheartedly, and training unswervingly for that purpose, according to the prescribed methods of his time, should surely be considered as logical, as useful and praiseworthy, as that of the scientist, the athlete, the business man, submitting to the rules of the search in seeking their goals.

From my own experience I would say that of all devotees to a single purpose, the monk, although missing many of the things considered necessary to human happiness, succeeds in obtaining rewards of permanent inner peace and happiness greater than do most.

Monasticism, like all other human institutions, has gone through a long process of change and growth through the ages, as its fundamental religious idealism has been expressed in different forms, according to the changing conceptions of men as to the relations of the temporal to the eternal. There may be much in it subject

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to criticism, in both its past and its present manifestations, as there inevitably is in all human enterprises—in science, medicine, politics, economics, and so on. Until the utopia of perfect understanding and universal charity has arrived, the wise will not expect perfection in human undertakings and will not be unduly critical of the imperfections that accompany even man's most idealistic efforts.

XIV

I come now to write of the advent and growth of doubt about my religious creed, which was the crucial experience of my life as a monk, and ended in what the Church regards as the greatest catastrophe that can befall a Christian, loss of creedal faith.

We are persons of mystery even to ourselves and do not understand what goes on in our life, especially in our subconscious deeps. The impresses left on our soul, by heritage, environment, people, experiences of myriad sorts through every moment, books read—these become too intermingled and complex to be clearly traceable for evaluation. This is especially true of me, who never knew and kept track of what has taken place within me, have never been fond of reliving my yesterdays and planning my tomorrows.

Therefore when I come to trace the origins of that doubt of which I only became conscious when it was full-grown, too strong to be either laughed or prayed away, I am at a loss to find many of the roots that doubtless were growing slenderly in my unconscious but were prevented from reaching to the surface by that dweller on the threshold, strictest of censors. Two or three instances I may point out, not as causes of doubt, because in relation to my faith they were of no great immediate importance, but as indicating subterranean influences at work.

All through my teaching of philosophy there was one subject that I had to leave in an unsatisfactory and unfinished stage of resolution. That was the question of the *nature of necessary being*, and its relation to contingent, or created, existences.

On the one hand, the reason readily perceives that if anything now exists, something must, by its own very *nature*, have existed always, because out of absolute nothingness nothing could ever come. Here at the very beginning of philosophical reflection the human mind is brought up against the overwhelming idea of eternal *being*, which must have within itself the reason of its existence, being the source of all being as, *ipsum esse*, it must itself be very being or existence. This we have called *necessary being* and attributed to it, apparently with the strictest logic, certain characteristics, such as eternal duration, unchangeableness (for must it not be ever in full and complete possession of itself, being not only all *being*, but very *beingness* itself?)—in short, all perfection of *being*, everlasting possession in the one moment of its measure of duration: the *eternal now*. This was the *actus purissimus* of Aristotle, with no admixture of *potentia*—the highest conception, perhaps, of the human intellect.

On the other hand, we are conscious of continual change—of imperfection, of growth and death in life about us. We have argued that as a consequence of this change and imperfection, this universe of which we are conscious and a part could not be the eternal, necessary *being*, nor yet a part of it, as, by its very *nature*, that could have no parts. This ever changing *being* we have called *contingent being*, which, as it did not have the reason of its existence within itself, must be dependent on the power and creative will of *necessary being*.

Here in a nutshell we have the philosophy of *dualism*,

of necessary and contingent being, of God and the universe, of Creator and creature, which is at the very foundation of historic Christianity.

The contrastive philosophy is that of monism, which holds, in one form or another, that necessary being alone exists, denying for it the power of creating anything outside itself, for the reason that, as it is being (or existence) itself, to be, to exist, everything that is must partake of the nature of that which is being.

Monism exists in many forms among the religions and philosophies of the world. The fundamental idea is the unity of all existence. Therefore, we have the materialistic or naturalistic monism of Haeckel, who chooses matter as the unifying principle of the apparent duality of matter and spirit; and the idealistic monism of Hegel, who conceives the universe as the self-development of mind or God.

Monism as a religion is called pantheism, whose cardinal teaching is that God is all, and all is God. The God-intoxicated Spinoza gave perhaps the most complete and exact elaboration of this form of belief, although it existed back through the Neoplatonists and the earlier Greeks to the ancient Brahmanism of the Hindus, who held Brahma to be the only true reality, and the physical world as we know it only the veil of Maya (illusion or appearance), which makes the one reality seem manifold. Not a very different doctrine, I should say, from that of present-day Christian Science.

If I have ranged somewhat in leading up to my point, here it is. I always had a secret admiration for the arguments of the monists, and for the magnificent unity that monism brought into a very confusing world. On the other hand I felt the weakness of the Scholastic answer to their fundamental proposition: namely, that to exist

everything must partake of that which itself is very existence.

I am not here interested in the controversy itself but mention it as indicating that in the recesses of my deeper nature I must have had a strong leaning toward a philosophy diametrically opposed to the dualism upon which historic Christianity is built. Though I long accepted the Church's view as the best one to be had, the fact that I remained dissatisfied with it proves that my leaning was serious.

Another experience, vague and intangible in itself, came during the strenuous years when I was lector and director of the International College in Rome. During those teaching years I went more deeply than ever before into the foundations of philosophy and theology. My mind was stretched to the utmost. As the sense of the ever present mystery of life grew almost beyond human endurance, I glimpsed the futility of efforts of the human mind to penetrate the deep meaning of existence. One day I came to class with a thesis prepared on some subject I do not now recall. Startling both the students and myself I found myself putting my thesis aside, launching instead into an impassioned discourse on the Mystery of Being.

During those years, I now feel sure, were sown in me those seeds of doubt in the power of our minds to know ultimate truth, and doubt in the validity of all known systems of human philosophy; the seeds that were to flower so abundantly, later, bearing fruit inimical to my orthodox belief. I came to look with insistent suspicion on cleverly fabricated systems of philosophy so neatly explaining the universe. The feeling grew in me that Aristotle, that giant of pure reason, and all his followers among the Scholastics, were building up their beautiful

and intricate systems on the imperfect and insufficient basis of naïve human experience and much vaunted "common sense." Was not some other-dimensional factor that eluded common sense being left out?

I began to have a greater appreciation for Plato, whose more intuitive, imaginative philosophy I had not previously relished. Gradually I came to a realization, like that of the man freed from his chains in Plato's cave, that reality was entirely other than the shadows pictured by the mind and senses.

Although St. Augustine and some of the other fathers of the early Church had been Platonists in philosophy, this tentative turning of my mind from Aristotle to Plato, as I now recognize, was the beginning of a process completed only some years later, the first definite weakening of the philosophical foundations of my faith. In a sense one has to believe almost as firmly in Aristotle as in the Church, so closely have the final definitions of her dogmas been cast in the Scholastic terminology. For instance, the defined dogma of faith, that *the soul is the form of the body*, implies an acceptance of the Aristotelian doctrine of matter and form.

The Church has always felt it her sacred duty to defend and keep intact the deposit of faith given to her in the beginning. This she has done, as occasion and disputes arose, by explicit decrees of councils or of the popes, defining in terms of the philosophy of the day the exact meaning in which her doctrines must be understood and accepted.

This wedding of faith and philosophy, of the eternal with the temporal, of the divine with the human, I personally consider unfortunate, though perhaps almost inevitable, considering that man himself partakes of the nature of both, and must express his highest spiritual

conceptions in terms from the senses and intellect. At the time with which I am now dealing, this seemed entirely natural to me, although something of an anomaly may be presented in the idea that before we could make a good Christian of a man we had to convert him to Aristotle! It is interesting to speculate on what would have been the development of Christianity if the Arabs had not brought Aristotle to the Western World in the ninth century, and if the Platonism of Augustine, or even the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, had become the prevailing philosophy in Europe during that period in which the Church's doctrines were to receive their final form.

The only other incident I should cite as presaging and perhaps influencing my eventual loss of faith may sound trivial to some, both in and out of the Church; I give it here in a conscientious effort to trace to its possible sources in earlier years the momentous inevitability that placed me outside the walls of my beloved cloister, outside the pale of Holy Mother the Church. This incident pertained to the phenomena of faith cures, spiritualism, hypnotism, and so on, and the Church's attitude toward these mystifying and bizarre happenings.

The Church readily admits the genuineness of these phenomena, for she has had a long experience and first-hand knowledge of them herself in the miracles and healings of the saints, the fantastic doings of the obsessed, the prophecies, bilocations, levitations, and the whole category of occult phenomena that frequently characterized the lives of her intensely holy members. Regarding all these unusual events that seemed to be beyond the operation of natural law, her attitude has been that they were produced by superhuman agency. If the phenomenon or miracle was produced by some devout member of the Church whose sanctity was well attested, the

presumption was that it was the result of divine intervention, in answer to the prayer of the holy person.

God, says the theologian, having created the universe with its laws, can suspend those laws and produce effects beyond or even contrary to them. For instance, the miracles and cures at Lourdes and other shrines are explained in this way. Although faith is usually a prerequisite on the part of the person healed, it is nevertheless a *conditio sine qua non*, and not the real cause of the miracle, whose sole author is God. On the other hand, if the unusual phenomenon is produced by someone not a member of the Church and/or not a saintly person, it would be rash to presume that God or His angels would intervene. As a consequence such a marvel must be ascribed to the only other superhuman agency of which the Church knows: namely, his satanic majesty the Devil.

The Church has had to make use of this important personage on many occasions to explain away difficulties arising from facts that seemed stubbornly to challenge her position or doctrines. She has abundant authority for this in the Scriptures, in both the Old and the New Testaments.

The Devil is pictured as carrying on a well-organized campaign against God and His Church, imitating the works of the saints and often masquerading as an angel of light. In order to explain in early myths and legends of the old pagan religions the existence of virgin births of saviours and many other seeming similarities to the life and death of Jesus, some theologians and early fathers went so far as to attribute them all to the malice of the Devil, who, foreseeing the coming dispensation of God in relation to man, started these legends centuries before in order, when it should arrive, to discredit the real economy of salvation that God had in view for man.

Just so was the Devil brought in again to explain the miracles outside the Church. This convenient use of Satan to explain away difficulties always seemed far-fetched to me; but as there were no more satisfactory explanations at hand, I accepted it.

In the case of unusual phenomena produced in spiritualistic seances and by a number of other occult events, however, I came to the conclusion, after a fairly thorough consideration of the evidence, that diabolical agencies had nothing to do with them and that, on the contrary, they were the result of natural laws of which we knew little or nothing. I became convinced on the basis of study that some at least of these phenomena were genuine and not mere tricks.

To take a particular example, I knew that if three or four persons placed their hands lightly on a small wooden table, the table would in a short while tilt and move, sometimes even rising entirely from the floor, in apparent defiance of the law of gravity. Again, if the same persons placed their hands on a heavier wooden table, a much longer time would elapse before any movement would occur, or, if the table were very heavy indeed, no motion at all would take place. Further, the table would move in the experiments more easily with some groups than with others. Increasing the number of participants or decreasing the weight of the table would increase the ease and quickness with which the phenomenon took place. On the other hand, no matter how many persons placed their hands on a table of light iron, no movement whatever would occur.

In my opinion, all this pointed clearly to a relation of cause and effect, to some natural law related to the number and actions of persons, on the nature and weight of the table, and who could say on what else?

I Was a Monk

Now, we held the power of Satan in great respect, and I knew that if he so chose, he could move a table, regardless of its size and material.

In retrospect this deductive line may seem supremely silly, but for me it represented an important step inasmuch as it caused me for the first time to form a definite opinion of my own, opposed to the attitude and mind of the Church. No matter of faith was involved, and I could hold any opinion on the subject I liked, even though I might have been judged rash in opposing the usual interpretation as expressed by the theologians of the Church.

It was important for two reasons, in the light of later events. First, my complete and simple faith in the all-wisdom of the Church was shaken, as shown by judging her interpretation wrong, albeit of something in itself of minor importance. The first stone in the foundations of my faith having been loosened, it could not but tend to loosen others. The second reason that gave crucial personal importance to my independent judgment was that it placed me in the position of dangerously tampering with the keystone of the arch of the Church's proof of her divine mission: namely, with the nature of miracles.

The proof of the nature of miracles is presented in terms such as these: A man called Jesus lived a beautiful, unselfish life nineteen centuries ago, and claimed to be the Son of God. This we learn from the writings of his followers, taken as historical documents. But the mere claim to be God's Son and to have a message from Him concerning man's salvation would not be sufficient to convince the human mind of later generations, even supported by a blameless, Godlike life, for the possibility of delusion would inevitably be present. And so this man said: "If you don't believe my words, believe then the

works I do." Thus he appealed to his works as the final proof of his mission from God. What were those works? They were healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead to life—in short, miracles.

Now, the argument runs, miracles can be performed only by God's power, or at most by His permission and concurrence. Therefore if a man make certain claims and call God to witness to their truth by the performance of miracles, his claims have received the stamp of God's approval, and what he teaches must therefore be received as bearing the seal of God. The argument goes on from there to prove, from the words and actions of Jesus, the formation of a group of disciples whom he taught and then commissioned to go out into the world, teaching what he had taught them, promising them that he would be with them always. Thus does the Church derive her authority to teach, and the divine protections to save her from error in handing on to succeeding generations the message of Jesus.

Armed with this authority, she returns to the historical Scriptures, pronouncing them inspired, and drawing from them and from her tradition from apostolic times the various doctrines of the Catholic faith, built up and officially defined when and as disputes arose as to their exact meaning. The Church does not claim a new revelation each time she defines a doctrine as of faith; rather she claims divine protection to keep her from error in interpreting and unfolding the revelation once given to the Apostles and continuously confided to her guardianship. The thesis that during the centuries there is a growth in the understanding of the original message of Jesus is well presented, I think, by Cardinal Newman in his work *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.

I Was a Monk

I think my summary of the Church's argument for her authority to teach is a fair one, logically very strong and hard to refute, if, indeed, anyone were interested in doing so, as, for my part, I am not. If the human mind must accept some form of doctrinal belief or creed concerning Jesus Christ and his message to humanity, I think I should prefer the Catholic tradition as the most logical and consistent. My personal dilemma was of a different nature, as I will presently explain.

By holding my individual theory as to the apparently preternatural phenomena used above for illustration, attributing them to natural but unknown laws rather than to the supernatural powers of either God or Satan, I was treading on dangerous ground because of the important position occupied by the theory of miracles, their nature and source. It was but a short step to consider under suspicion the supernatural character of the visions, the prophecies, and the miracles of the saints and even of Jesus himself, thus jeopardizing perspective on the whole structure of argument underlying the authority of the Church.

This step I did not take consciously, and I thought myself to be as firm a believer in the Catholic faith as ever when I was sent to Switzerland on medical advice to recuperate my health.

I had no personal quarrel of any sort with the Church, or with my superiors in the monastery. On the contrary I was on the best of terms with them all, loving them dearly as they loved me.

I had everything to lose and nothing temporal to gain in leaving my order and, in natural consequence, the Church. Indeed, had I been ambitious I should have remained in my monastery; I occupied its next to highest

office and there was every indication that I would go further. Padre Fulgenzio, my General, had offered to make me bishop of Bulgaria; the see was then vacant, and the bishop of Bulgaria is always a Passionist. I had begged to be excused from the honor. My work for the congregations of the cardinals had been well received, I had been told by Padre Luigi, who had great prestige and influence in Rome and was a great personal friend of the Pope, Benedict XV. He told me that in all likelihood in the course of time I should wear the cardinal's hat.

The reader will surmise that I am loath to speak of these things but the fact should be conveyed that personal reasons had no part in the final decision to leave the beloved cloister, the only home I had known for many years, and the Church. My conscience forced the decision upon me. I had no entanglements, of the heart or otherwise, and went alone from a happy environment into an empty and rather cold world, of which I had no experience and in which I could hope for little success as a layman, without connections. My one surviving brother, Father Joe, wrote me that sooner would he meet my corpse at the dock in New York than ever shake hands with me if I left my order.

No, personal reasons were not my motive.

And so I come to the experiences of great change that culminated in the ending of my life as a monk. I should add that doubt did not come from the usual causes that may affect a person's faith. If it had, a remedy might have been found.

In accordance with the directions of my doctor, I exchanged my cloister for a pension balcony room overlooking the majesty of snow-covered mountains towering around the valley of Davos in Switzerland. Obeying his

rules, I put aside practically all reading and study, spending most of the daylight hours in a chrysalis-like state in a sheepskin sleeping-bag on the balcony couch. This in itself was a unique experience for me. Beside the many hours of mental prayer and other religious exercises daily, my life up to that point had been a very busy one indeed.

At my conversion I had become convinced that the world of activity we live in and observe about us is a purely transitory state, having meaning only when related to that permanent and eternal state which must exist as its counterpart and foundation. Then my sensing of this was vague, in the terms of my Christian faith. But I felt its truth instinctively, and it guided my decision that the only real life would be found in terms of that eternal reality which I contemplated as of God.

Contrary to boyhood dreams, my monastic life had become a life of exceptional activity, predominantly mental, to be sure, but nevertheless of a pattern to link me to a world of change, impeding the realization in my consciousness of that real and eternal world which I saw as my true home. In my hours of prayer I glimpsed that world sufficiently to attest to its beautiful reality, but it seemed always just out of my reach. I must devote myself to the duties of the nearer, active world; always it was my duty to come back to studying men's philosophies and other knowledge, to lecture to students, to preach sermons, hear confessions, and in many practical ways take part in the world that for me fell short of reality. Now an all but full stop had been put for me to habitual activity. In itself inactivity became for me a chrysalis state.

At first the enforced stoppage appealed to me. It produced an effect resembling what I had aspired to as a young man, when I yearned toward the life of the Car-

thusian monks as my ideal; a life unhindered and undistracted from constant outward and inward freedom to live and to contemplate, in the only world I considered real. The impulse that made me as a boy desire to lead the purely contemplative life, wherein I should have,—not mere short hours, but days, years, in which to unite myself ever more strongly to the eternal, finding the center of my being, was quite evidently no passing dream, but indicated a fundamental aspect of my nature.

In those first days in Switzerland I thought with a kind of reverent exultation that here at last, in this chrysalis state, I could turn my back on grublike crawling about among the ideas and theories of other grubs, losing myself in free contemplation of existence, uninterrupted and undisturbed by assigned duties or indeed by any external call pulling me down to the world of change and activity.

I am aware that what I term a search for reality some modern psychologists may label *flight from reality*, a seeking to fly to the peace and state of total irresponsibility experienced within the mother womb. I am not interested in defending, only in relating as clearly as I am able the stages I went through during this period. Let me only interject that modern psychology is very young, and youthfully limited to the short-range, materialistic view of life. When it has had the time and experience to grasp the whole range of the experiences of human consciousness, it will probably come into a larger view of life, just as the scientist, so limited in the nineteenth century by his concepts of matter, now has larger horizons and hence envisions a world totally different from the small world he was able to conceive but a few decades ago.

Contrary to representing the flight from reality, may

not this urge experienced by men to retire from the intense activity churning within and round about them, in order to find a more satisfying sense of reality, be instead the progressive urge of life toward a higher state, rather than a retrograde flight back to a former state? Can the instinct of the worm, to cease its crawling on the earth, feeding on leaves, and to wrap itself in a new womb from which it will be reborn a new creature of beauty feeding on the nectar of flowers in a glorious free world above the earth—can this instinct be considered “a flight from reality”? Is it not rather nature’s way of bringing about a miraculous transformation of the lowly grub into the heavenly winged creature that excites our imagination and even our poetry as it finds for itself the freedom of the upper regions?

May there not equally be a stage in man’s life where instinct, nature within him, urges a rest from the ceaseless activity of the earth, of the endless circling of senses and mind? May not nature work its miracle within man too, during an apparent stage of inactivity, bringing about the birth of a new creature, liberated from the worries, the entanglements, the smallnesses of its immature grublike earth life, into the glorious freedom of a new world?

I shall leave these questions for the reader himself to ponder, being content with the expression of my own conviction that, so long as a man lives in this world with only his intellect and senses to guide him, he is bound to the earth like a grub and has not therefor yet reached the mature state that is his due.

This period of rest lasted for me perhaps as long as six months. I do not clearly recall the exact interval. The important thing was that during it my mind wandered where it would. I no longer directed my thoughts as be-

fore, to prepare lectures or prove theses. I was wholly relaxed, and my mind in a dreamlike state between thought and contemplation. I am not able to give a clear and orderly account of the ideas that passed to and fro through my mind, any more than we are able to recapture the dreams that pass through the mind if we lie looking up into the skies during an afternoon of relaxation in the country.

My own native mind had had little opportunity to assert itself in the preceding years, as it had been too occupied with studying and teaching the ideas of others. One may inquire whether this is not one characteristic of our conception and method of education. We call *thinking* the passing of other men's thoughts through our mind, thus rarely presenting to the growing mind the matchless opportunity to be found in sensing the nature of the problem itself, and in tracking down the answer with our own native powers.

During my "quiet time," realizing this, I allowed my mind total freedom to open to the riddle of the mystery of existence, which had marked the birth of my philosophic mind at the age of twenty or thereabouts and always had held a fascination for me in the years between. This opening of the mind did not entail an effort to solve the riddle, but rather to let it find its foothold in my soul, to the end that I might the more fully realize it. It is a process similar to the stage of contemplation in prayer, where the faculties of intellect, sense, and imagination are quieted, and one contemplates, without mental movement or flexing, the object under consideration.

XV

The practice of detached contemplation of reality is, I am sure, good for the soul of any man. It produced in me during those months results in my outlook on life which changed the whole trend of my existence.

My many years' study of philosophy, with its abstruseness and subtleties, had naturally begotten in me a power of concentration beyond the average. My hour of mental prayer every morning and another hour every evening for nearly a quarter of a century had given me a facility in quieting the life of the senses and of the discursive mind, and a capacity for fixing my attention with a quiet, steady regard on the subject of consideration. So, during my many hours alone on the balcony in the stimulating Alpine air of the high altitude, I brooded over the mystery of life, *not trying to solve it*, but striving to lose myself in its depth, allowing its inexplicableness to flow over me.

The processes of life have had a great fascination for me always. It has been my habit to take every opportunity that presented to gain a deeper knowledge of biology, always feeling, as I still feel, that in some way the stages and activities of growing things contain hints as to the nature of the universe. Therefore, too, during this period I contemplated the life of flowers and of animals, with their marvelous structure and organs, the astounding mystery of life and growth as manifested in nature. I

tried deliberately to focus my consciousness in the life principle of growing things, in order to know it directly from within, not simply from without, as is our usual form of knowing.

My favorite subject was the cell, that mysterious unit of life, and the hidden operations that take place within its microscopic being. If we could understand those operations, would we not ultimately be able to solve the riddle of existence? That extraordinary and mystifying process we now call *mitosis* hints to me in miniature at some eternal process in the heart of reality, which is one and becomes dual, in the way that the theory of the little universe of the atom hints at duality of one primal energy.

Naturally the vague dreamings of my chrysalis stage did not reach this advanced degree of pantheistic speculation! Lying out under the stars through long evenings of cloudless skies, I contemplated the heavens in this detached manner, without the effort of reasoning. I doubt if any occupation is more wholesome and beneficial to the soul of man than gazing in long silence at the starry heavens on a clear night. We may begin by rehearsing in the mind what we know of astronomy—the prodigious masses, the inconceivable distances, the unbelievable speeds, withal the interconnection and probably the unity of the whole, in one grand system embracing the myriad of far-off island universes. Such contemplation in time stretches one's consciousness to the utmost, bringing in its train a sense of perspective that makes us see not so much the smallness or unimportance of man as the smallness and inadequacy of man's conception of the universe.

This was the effect of my contemplation upon me. A new faculty of knowing seemed to be born in me, in the

quiet stillness yet intense activity of consciousness within me. I seemed to touch the heart of reality, the very essence of existence, with a directness, an immediacy, rendering all my former knowledge false and illusory. As it were, I seemed to sense another dimension; or perhaps I should express it better were I to say that all dimensions seemed to go, leaving me conscious of a presence, a reality having no form that the senses could comprehend, yet not abstract and lifeless, as were the ideas of the mind, but concrete, vital, palpitating with *realness*.

I had no inclination to explain this experience to myself, but felt content to dwell within it in happy realization. In the same way one may contemplate a sunset, silent but tremendously alive, and carried out of one's workaday consciousness.

It is not necessary here to classify or explain this state into which, with ease and without the curious tenseness that marked its first appearance, I soon began to drift. Call it illusion, or even hallucination, it is not of interest to defend its validity, as though it were a dear possession. To attempt to explain its nature would, like the amateur brand of philosophizing, be like the rotations of a squirrel in a cage. The only hope I can see for amateur philosopher and squirrel alike is that eventually the cage will fly to pieces, freeing its prisoners for a larger world. Will it be the world of "ultimate reality"? Who knows?

Let me emphasize, I do not allow myself to jump to the conclusion that my experience was, *per se*, a realization of the presence of God. During my novitiate I walked many months in a blissfulness of feeling that involuntarily I designated to myself as the presence of God. I prefer to moderate appraisal of this later experience. As I recognize the earlier feeling as, to some degree,

an overbelief, perhaps there was an element of overbelief in the later one also. But whether in truth it represented a direct union of the soul with God, or the merging of the soul in the consciousness of a being larger than oneself, or the attainment of a higher participation in the consciousness of one's own larger nature, it came, it seemed to me, to the same thing, an overbelief that was *in the right direction*. I had the definite impression of the loss of my own personality in that of a larger consciousness, to be called either God or at the least *on the way to God*. Nothing can be gained for the cause of religion by jumping to conclusions beyond those warranted by the facts. If a cell in my body could merge its tiny consciousness with mine, it would be an overbelief to call it anything but a belief *in the right direction* toward union with God. The point is, if, as I am inclined to believe, *all* consciousness is ultimately one, that losing one's own personality in that of a larger consciousness, which we may call God, or *on the way to God*, is *in the right direction*.

If this be the true explanation, then the experience of the great mystics is a natural one, and the philosopher and the psychologists will realize that they have been forming their theories of mind, knowledge, and being while leaving out of consideration the most important, the highest, experience of the race. Perhaps the philosopher and the teacher of the future will have to undergo a long purgative training that will free them from the illusion of the senses and the mind, enabling them to function in the higher air of pure intelligence! While we are about it, should we not, as Plato wisely suggests, require equal training of our rulers and lawmakers?

This, however inadequately related, was the essence of what was happening to me in the pure, winy air of the

Alps, and I pass on to narrate the consequences it had on my attitude toward life and on the external events of my history, which we refer to as "our life."

Let me preface what follows by saying that if the experience had happened to me while on my knees in my monastery choir, seeking the goal of the mystical "union with God," I should undoubtedly have labeled it as such, considering it a reaching down of God to my soul in answer to my enervored aspiration. I should have lived happily to the end of my days in my beautiful cloister home, continuously reseeking this exalted fervor of God.

As it was, it happened to me in what impressed me as purely natural surroundings, wherefor it left on me the impression of a purely natural happening. It was a growing state, becoming more distinct as time went on and, gradually, my normal habitation.

Let me say here, in this regard, that this distinction between the naturalness and the super-naturalness of my experience contains the whole essence of the change in my outlook, of which I became conscious only slowly as the months rolled by. Catholicism is essentially a supernatural religion. I use the term not in its usual sense, but in the particular meaning given to it by the Church, which I shall try to explain briefly.

God could have created man in a purely natural state, but did not do so. On the contrary, He created Adam in a supernatural state, that is, endowed him with divine grace that was not his natural due and that, in some way, made him a partaker of the divine nature. His end or goal became the enjoyment of the direct, eternal vision of God, to which possibility he had no natural right or capacity, but which he received from the infusion of grace that raised him, in a sense, to a likeness with God.

Had Adam maintained his original innocence, he

would have attained this goal without dying, after a certain time of probation on the earth. But he fell; by disobedience to God's one commandment his nature became weakened and inclined to evil. His sin, the loss of grace, culminated in physical death. He was in a worse state than if he had been created in a "state of nature," for he lost his divine inheritance, his sonship of God and his right to enjoy the vision of God, the end of his own being.

Hence follows the need of adequate atonement to the divine justice, which had suffered an indignity that was infinite in extent, because of the infinite dignity of Him who was offended. Man, being finite, could not make such reparation, hence the plan of the Incarnation of the Son of God and his death to make this atonement, and the redemption of man and his restoration to his primeval state of grace. This redemption and restoration can only be applied through the sacraments of the Church, instituted by Christ as the channels or streams through which his merits, his grace, are conveyed to men. Hence the vital need of baptism, which cleanses the soul of the guilt of that original sin we all inherit from our first parents as we were conceived after their fall. We were born, as the result of Adam's sin, enemies of God, and cannot regain our friendship with Him except the merits of redemption be applied to us by the means ordained thereto by Christ.

Hence, too, the need of the sacrament of penance, administered in confession for those who again lose the state of grace by the commission of grievous or mortal sin after baptism, and the eagerness of all Catholics to assure themselves of the services of the priest before their death.

The doctrine of grace, by which man is raised from a

natural to a supernatural state and destiny, is the cornerstone of the Catholic faith. Having been created originally in the supernatural state, man can no longer be in the "state of nature" in which God could have created man, but did not. In this natural state man would have died as he does now, and would have come according to his practice of natural virtue to a state of everlasting natural happiness because he is immortal, but not to the vision of God in heaven. He must be either in a state of grace and heir of God—the supernatural state—or in a state of sin, fallen from his high estate and destined to eternal separation from God.

Catholic theology is a closely knit structure founded on this doctrine of the supernatural order, which is seldom fully understood by those outside the Church, and often not even by the faithful themselves. To doubt of this cornerstone is to destroy the whole superstructure. And yet, curiously enough, although as I see it now the trend in my consciousness was toward doubt in that direction, the final debacle came from an entirely different source, as I shall show.

Had I realized at this time that my faith was in danger, I should doubtless have prayed and turned my mind definitely away from my day-dreaming. This thought reminds me of a wistful and illuminating case that shows how highly we regard the gift of supernatural faith, how fearful we are of losing it.

I was discussing some point of philosophy or theology—I don't recall the subject—with one of our most learned monks, and we were getting down into the subject rather deeply when he suddenly left me without explanation. The following day when I sought to reopen the question he replied: "Let's leave it where it is. I feel it is a dangerous subject for me; yesterday I left you

abruptly in order to go before the Blessed Sacrament and pray."

I have always loved the man for his beautiful simplicity, but it shows how, in our discussions and readings, we may often pretend to doubt, in order to prove a thesis or refute a heresy, but in reality we feel strong in our own position, and if the shadow of real doubt crosses our mind we will hasten to call for help, to exorcise the devil just as we would if a thought of unchastity involuntarily entered our mind.

With me the critical result of allowing my detached contemplation free rein was twofold.

At first I experienced a gathering distrust in man's ordinary conception of existence, as expressed in his philosophy. As highly sensitized contemplation pushed back for me horizons of insight, sharpened intuitions concerning the nature of things, gradually I came face to face with the smallness and unreality of man's ordinary conceptions of life as formed in his mind and expressed in his philosophical theories and systems. I began to feel that existing theories did not penetrate into the heart of the mystery of life, but rather were concerned with its external appearances. In other words, these theories were concerned rather with man's conceptions of reality than with reality itself.

The elaborate systems of the great philosophers began to appear artificial and very small. Even those intellectual giants Plato and Aristotle seemed pygmy-like in stature before the presence of the great mystery they would solve. The great controversies of the past dwindled into childish disputes about unrealities. The nominalist and the realist seemed equally far from the truth, which must be a living, concrete something to be directly apprehended,

and must forever elude the human intellect that dealt merely in ideas and abstractions.

I seemed to be looking from a position above reason upon the working of my own mind, in its efforts to explain reality in terms of its abstract ideas and to realize the utter futility of those efforts. I knew that my philosophical explanations, all philosophies, were based on experience at the periphery of existence—or from below, to use another metaphor—and could not explain or touch the heart of reality, which, to use the irrational expression of occult philosophy, seemed to have no center and no periphery, no above and no below, but whose core seemed everywhere, whose circumference nowhere.

Therefore the initial result of my contemplation was the loss of what I would designate as my philosophic faith; my trust in the human mind as a guide to Truth. Accordingly I came to regard all efforts of the intellect to explain existence as fruitless, as far as its conclusions about the ultimate nature of things were concerned. I believe that Plato, the most intuitive of philosophers, must have felt this same hopelessness of the effort to arrive at true knowledge of the real when he wrote the parable of the men in the cave, who confused knowledge of reality with that of the shadows thrown on the walls of their cave.

The very number and diversity of contradictory systems of philosophy should lead us to suspect that the problems they seek to solve are beyond the powers of the intellect. Our innate feeling, that reality must be other than as we perceive it with our senses and our reason, must account for our willingness to accept as plausible so many different reports from that “region beyond,” and so many “metaphysical” systems built upon them. This feeling is sharpened by our own flashes

of what I have come to think of as direct perception or intelligence, in those illuminating moments when our consciousness is keyed by some experience of great beauty or great love to a high frequency seeming to transport us to another realm. We soon fall back into the ordinary rhythms of our lives where the intellect governs, nevertheless retaining vestiges of fragrant memory of, a faith in, a higher order of existence, which in some way we have briefly touched and which we somehow sense must be more real than our normal one, which must therefore be taken into consideration in any philosophy that would explain our lives to us.

But philosophy is like the tower of Babel, which would build to the heavens with bricks made of earth. In my mountain retreat I began to doubt that the goal of philosophy would ever be attained.

This was my first loss of faith: faith in the power of the human mind to know Truth about the Ultimate.

Far from being disillusioned or depressed by such a discovery at this juncture of my life, I felt a release, an uplifting joy. I was coming into a great new, unknown world out of the small world pictured by my mind, with all its unsolved difficulties, contrivances, and contradictions. I felt thrilled by thoughts of the vastness of a real world, as distinct and other from my old thought-world.

All the difficulties that met the philosopher at every step in building up the elaborate edifice of his system, I now knew were caused by his imperfect conception of existence, by the imperfection of the philosopher's mind, not by the nature of reality itself. Our old difficulties of matter and spirit—the absolute and the relative, God and creation, free will and God's foreknowledge, time and eternity—these and countless other obstacles that blocked our path to a clear and consistent conception of

the universe I now realized came from the fact that we were trying to solve the mystery of life with a faculty never intended by nature for that purpose.

I felt as Plato's prisoner in the cave must have felt as his chains dropped from him and he turned from the shadows to the light. I felt as the germ of life in a seed must feel as its confining shell disintegrates and what would seem loss and death turns into new life. In losing my naïve faith in the mind I felt I was coming into a great freedom, as a man must feel at losing chains which, all of his life until then, have bound him to a pillar. In short, I did not feel I had lost anything irreplaceable, rather that I had gained a new life; as if a new faculty of knowing had been born out of the travail of the mind. Thus must a man feel who was born blind and is then blessed in seeing the light.

During my months of resting and dwelling in a suspended mid-realm of dreaming, this fundamental change in me accelerated into the greatest illumination that had ever come to me. Although the experience involved the unlearning of all that I had ever learned, I was strangely happy. I had no presentiment of a new conception of life, and felt no inclination to form a new philosophy. I knew that, now more than ever, that would be impossible. I simply felt born into a new world that was good to live in, needing no explanation, rather in the sense of acceptance, in which it is good simply to love beauty, to enjoy beauty, to rest when tired, to drink when thirsty. The urge to explore sources, to explain, comes only afterward.

My feeling was similar to that enjoyably experienced for many months in the novitiate, when I walked with God and felt Him near.

. . .

The second and more formidable stage of my contemplative experience was the loss of my faith in orthodox or dogmatic religion of any and whatever forms.

At first this may seem strange to the reader, because one would perhaps suppose that my faith would rather have been strengthened by this apparently direct contact with a larger world, concerning which religion has so much to say.

That is just it. Dogmas, or doctrines of religion, have much to say about the nature of that larger world and our relations to it that is not, as we have been led to believe, the result of inspiration or revelation; rather it represents the inferences drawn by the human mind from inspiration on the part of a great seer.

I began to feel that dogmatic religion and its theology were man's effort to explain and systematize, in terms of the intellect, the revelation or illumination a certain individual may have received, by either momentarily or permanently dwelling in that world of higher consciousness. The possibility of such revelation I could not doubt. Even the fact of it I could readily accept. But the expression of it in human language I began to know must suffer from the limitations of that language; the formulation of that expression, in terms of a particular philosophy, must inevitably be tainted by that fundamental earth-boundness which I was convinced clung to the works of man and of his mind.

In sum, therefore, my loss of philosophic faith carried with it loss of religious faith, as far as the dogmatic formulation of that faith was concerned.

To be better understood, let me cite a concrete example, though I must add in passing that I did not reach this momentous and, for me, life-upsetting conclusion

suddenly; its truth grew on me during the two years in which I was in a transition state.

Let us take the example of Christianity. Jesus, a man evidently like ourselves, went about doing good, leading a beautiful life. He spoke of his Father and his kingdom, and said that he and the Father were one; that those who saw him saw also the Father. He gave utterance to a teaching that, like his kingdom, was not of this world. He worked wonders, healing the sick and raising the dead. He taught men: *Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are the meek.*

Briefly these are the facts. Many, seeing and hearing these facts, followed him. I too, reading his story, am stirred to love him, and would follow after him from afar.

The early followers of Jesus, responding to a natural instinct, banded themselves together to live in accordance with his example and teaching. A new religion was born, although they hardly realized it themselves, for they continued to observe the Jewish law.

Up to this point I am a good Christian and should love to be allowed to follow this Man, this Son of God, from afar off. But I am not allowed to do so and call myself a Christian, for none of the societies that claim descent from him and profess to teach his doctrine will acknowledge me as such, because I cannot subscribe to the interpretation of his message that, claiming to be the only true one, they would force upon me.

This interpretation of the message of Jesus in terms of the human mind, in terms of Hebrew and Greek philosophy, current at the time, or later as questions arose, I cannot but feel to have been—not so much an error, because it was so natural a course to adopt—but a

humanizing, an intellectualizing of what was far above the human intellect.

It was this human part of faith that I lost on my mountaintop. I there entered into knowledge that Jesus, and God, and man were far other, and far greater and more beautiful, than man can ever put into words and creeds. I deplored the bringing down to the level of man's mind the life and teachings of Jesus, the whole appeal and value of which consisted in its unreason, in its fragrance of a higher world, which was its own passport to the human heart.

Let men, if they must, explain to their minds, according to whatever philosophy they hold, the nature of God and the nature of Jesus, and interpret, as they have the wisdom and purity of heart to interpret, the meaning of his life and his words. This is a perfectly natural process and need not be resisted. The evil and sacrilege came from confusing this interpretation with the original revelation itself and treating both as equally sacred; and, on the purely personal level, from me, setting up my interpretation as the only true and orthodox one and imposing it, by the rack if necessary, on others.

This unholy wedlock of divine inspiration and human knowledge and the organizing of it in a body of doctrine, an orthodoxy that is proffered as sacred, are the greatest crime committed against God and His gentle Son, and led to numberless other crimes and brutalities perpetrated in their names. This I now feel is the most unfortunate aspect of all religions, and especially of Catholic Christianity. This tendency and effort of the human mind to condense the inspiration and revelation of a great seer—even of the Son of God if you will—into the narrow limits of human understanding are the source of all the ungodly divisions among the Christian churches,

and of the hatreds and murders that have derived therefrom.

As we must, for the sake of the human mind, define in terms of its exact meaning the revelation whose whole significance consists in its being a perception of truth and reality, of God if you prefer, beyond the powers of the ordinary consciousness of man to attain. We set to work to deprive it of this beauty and meaningfulness by casting it into the rigid dogmas of formal creeds.

For example, the wonderful soul-experience of Jesus that he haltingly expressed in human language as "I and the Father are one" is seized upon by the intellect as an abstract pronouncement of doctrine rather than—as in fact it is—a beautiful expression by a great man of a direct experience, possible of being understood only by him who has had a like experience. The superintellectual experience of the lover, the artist, the mother, the poet, means nothing to those who are not lovers, artists, mothers, poets. The exaltation, the immediate touch with reality with its accompanying ecstasy, cannot be translated into words, which are of the mind. Every effort at doing so loses that fragrance, that vital something which is of its essence, and therefore conveys no meaning except to those who, too, have been raised above the earth and the mind, into those regions of direct contact with Being, God, Reality, or whatever term we immaturely—and wrongly—choose to express the inexpressible.

Must we forthwith begin to formulate dogmas and explain who Jesus is, and who the Father is, and the nature of each, and the nature of the union between them that makes them one?

A child will explain it in a child's way; a Platonist in terms of Plato's philosophy; an Aristotelian in terms of

Aristotle; a materialist in terms of his philosophy, as a pure illusion, a pathological experience bordering on hysteria or insanity. In short, man explains in terms of his mind an experience that is actually beyond his mind. The original sin of the philosopher, the explainer, the creed-maker, is his faith in the ability of the human mind to understand and formulate into statements of truth that which then must be accepted under pain of eternal damnation—the nature of reality, and man's experience of it.

The realization of this was the cause of my loss of faith in the creeds of religion, as formulated by the churches. But there remained, or was born new, a larger, deeper faith, which lost nothing of the beauty of the old, and was built on an unshakable foundation because it did not seek to define anything in terms of the mind.

To those who stand firmly on the particular creed of their particular church, I might appear as the destroyer of faith and of religion, classed with Voltaire and Ingersoll and those others whose sole purpose seemed to be to point out the inconsistencies and contradictions of Christianity and to destroy man's belief in God and in religion. I should not relish the classification, because I never have respected the type of mind of the critic who can cleverly tear down but will not or cannot construct. It is easy to point to the errors and mistakes of poor humanity in its growth, both past and present, as it is easy to recognize the immature stages in a child and their manifestations, or for the biologist to trace the cumbersome efforts of nature in her long strivings toward a more perfect organism. But it requires a deeper, broader understanding of life than is possessed by the mere critic to perceive amid its crudenesses the beauty and promise of maturity in life in all its stages. Do we

fail to recognize in its embryonic stage the beauty of the bird and its song?

No, I am not a destroyer. I would not take from any one his faith in his creed. Rather I would urge him to distinguish well between the two elements that go to make it up.

One of these is of the mind, which is of little real and no permanent value. This is the element that may make you hate your brother and destroy him because he will not believe as you believe. This element of the mind is not really religion at all, but simply the mental encasement of the true and vital germ of faith which alone, to my mind, possesses value.

The other, divine, element of faith or religion is born in man's higher being, beyond his mind; it neither needs nor can have any apology from the rational side of his nature. It is a direct perception and, I fear, does not exist in many among those who are the most clamorous in behalf of their creeds. The divine element of faith is akin to love, and just about as explainable. It may exist as the nucleus of a creed, or it may exist entirely free from formal beliefs. It is the substance of *religion*, the eternal, living part of it; all else is accidental, subject to error, to change, to loss. The divine element of faith is no more founded on reason than are life and love and beauty founded on reason.

The tragedy in men's lives is that this true *faith* is nearly always confused with *faith in a creed*. Both, indiscriminately, are called *religion*. When a man finds it impossible to believe longer in his religious creed he loses simultaneously his precious gift of faith, because he confused two things that are essentially distinct. He turns in consequence to materialism as the only tenable interpretation of life.

For lack of an understanding of this distinction, at times we witness terrific and soul-racking struggles in men and women who love their ancient faith with all its beauty and memories of bygone days, of experiences of soul connected with it, of dear ones who were comforted and strengthened by it and whose eyes were closed by the sacred anointing of its priest. Then the day comes when their minds become aware that they can no longer believe in certain, or perhaps any, of the doctrines of their church.

Are they then to discard as unreal and imaginary all those sentiments and experiences which meant so much to them in the past? Must they reject the beauty and love that once filled their souls? Must they consider that lovely old mother a victim of delusion in her simple faith and holy life? Can the deepest feelings of the human heart be thus subject to deception?

Is there no way to save the beautiful sentiments, the high concepts that have ennobled men's lives and changed the selfish, carnal brute into a loving, Christlike man? Must all this and more go as childish illusion because, forsooth, science and the human mind have proved that some of the facts and doctrines upon which religion seemed to be based are false?

Religion and faith, with all that they have wrought for the comfort, uplift, and ennobling of human life, can be saved from the assaults and inroads of the expanding human intellect only if their true basis be realized, and the transitory nature of creeds, as they have been confused with religion, bravely admitted. Then, and only then, will a man be secure in the possession of his faith, and his intellect free to investigate and speculate without fear of undermining his own or others' faith, which rests not on the facts of history or the theories of the

ologists, but upon that deeper part of his own nature which is beyond the power of his mind to fathom and explain, and which is likewise the source of everything that is sacred, beautiful, and true in his life.

If he cannot be satisfied with this invulnerable but more spiritual, more rarefied faith, but must call in the aid of his mind to define it more concisely, at least let him know exactly what he is doing, distinguishing between his essential faith and the dogmas he invents or adopts. Further, let him hold lightly these doctrines and creeds in which he wraps his faith, for as surely as he continues to grow, just so surely will he have to discard them for others more suited to his maturer understanding of life.

Happy will he be if the time comes when he realizes the futility and fundamental falseness of all expressions and formulations of his faith, knowing them for what they are: efforts of the mind to express the inexpressible, to formulate the formless. Then will he be in sympathy with all faiths, but a believer in none. Then will he be content to live his life serenely without explaining it, knowing that it is good and far surpasses in beauty and hope and love anything that the most extravagant creed ever pictured.

Conformity, orthodoxy, is the idol of small men, and we are all small. My departure, then, is not from this or that particular creed or church—for all are the outcome of the deep-rooted urge in us all—but is rather a parting of the ways with the limitations of our human minds and our reliance upon them in our dealings with our fellow men.

All the great, beautiful, ennobling things in human life are above mind, and come from that same region from which Jesus brought his message. Love, friendship,

beauty, altruism, pure faith, true religion, sacrifice, mother love, life itself, all are begot of God and are beyond the explaining and the leveling influence of our intellects. The great literature, the great painting, the great music of all ages have been conceived in the living realm of reality, and carry us upward to our true home, in which even now we dwell, did we but realize it.

God, and heaven, are here and now, to be lived in and enjoyed, did we but occasionally still our senses and our ideas, which, as the philosopher will tell you, are born of sense, and allow the light and warmth of that reality to fill our souls. This is the true religion; the illumination you bring back thence is the only true faith, and we have only to recall the words: "Be still, and know that I am God," to understand that it will not fit into human language.

This is the faith that has moved mountains and worked wonders in the past, beautifying and uplifting men's souls and making them capable of noble, unselfish, loving lives. The churches take pride in their saints, but wrongly, because holiness is not caused by conformity of belief with a given creed, but by that vital, living faith which is more than the mere formal acceptance of orthodox doctrines. This mental agreement with the teaching of a church has no value in itself, and no reward in heaven. Lack of faith, in this orthodox sense, is no hindrance to sanctity, to the loving of God and your neighbor. I can imagine the greatest saint being the greatest unbeliever, so far as and where creeds are concerned.

My departure is really not from the churches, for we are gregarious and form societies for every purpose. Why not, then, to worship in common, to encourage one another to follow the example of Jesus, and to listen to-

gether to the reading of the story of his life and teachings, especially in those centuries when books were rare?

Even orthodoxy itself seems inevitable, human nature again being what it is. We have it in our philosophies—witness true Latinists and false—in our art, our customs, our national traditions, our manners, fashions, in every phase of social life. We naturally seek common standards, and esteem as outlaws those who do not live up to them. We idealize the traditions of the elders, making of them something sacred. How then should religion expect to be free from the same conformation?

The real culprit is human nature herself, under the influence of the mind in its underdeveloped state. The mind, an imperfect faculty of knowing, is, in my opinion, the cause of all separateness, schism, competition, selfishness, for it relies on the testimony of the senses and conceives of reality as broken up into numberless individual units, failing to perceive the underlying unity of life and being, of which my experience on the mountain convinced me.

If I retain one bit of philosophy, it is that the mind, conscious of the activities taking place in and through these units of life we call "ourselves," invents a subject of attribution, a person that it regards as the cause, the source of this activity; it calls that subject, that person, "I." This sense of "I" is lost in all truly great experiences of our higher consciousness, as has been testified to countless times by the great mystics, the great artists, the great lovers. This testimony has been treated by the rationalizing mind as an aberration, a hallucination, while on the face of it it witnesses to the highest reaches of the human spirit and should be taken into consideration in the formation of any philosophy that would explain the whole of human life.

John Tettemer

This sense of "I," which seems so fundamental that philosophers like Descartes use it as the very foundation-stone of all search for true knowledge, and which cannot be doubted without asserting it, is to my present way of thinking a sheer figment of our minds, without any objective existence whatever.

If I am right—and I cannot prove it with reason, for it had its birth beyond reason—then this sense of "I" is the great illusion of mankind, of the human mind, and the source of all the maladjustment of man to his environment. By living in terms of the "I" we are living in a false center, out of harmony with life itself, which must be operating from the one center of all things, and which must be within us, as is the kingdom of God, and within all things. By setting up and living in terms of this false center men bring on themselves all the unhappiness, all the disharmony, of human life. If there be an original sin of which we are all heirs, and which by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge Adam bequeathed to his children, it is this sin, this illusion of the "I." Our salvation is in the realization of this basic error of the mind, and in the complete surrender of our entire being to Him who, alone, is.

This attitude of surrender, when accomplished with the whole being and not with the mind alone, is what has ever worked miracles, both of inward peace and of outward healing, in all the religions, past and present. It is the one vital principle of religion. All "absolute this" and "absolute that" are of the mind and of little value if perfect "surrender" has not taken place. If perfect "surrender" has taken place, absolutes of this or that are superfluous, for the life of Him who is perfect love will then live through us.

This sense of the self was got rid of by the mystics only

after the dreadful ordeal of the “dark night of the soul,” because their very seeking of God was tainted by this same sin or illusion of the self, and union with God came only when this sense of “I” dissolved. The great mystic Meister Eckhart must have sensed this truth when he said: “‘I am’ can be spoken by no creature, but by God alone, for it only becomes the creature to testify of itself as ‘I am not.’”

The staunch rationalist and materialist of the nineteenth century, taking their stand firmly on reason and matter, would certainly suffer confusion today when their very real and tangible matter has turned into pure energy in the hands of their successors, who are beginning to speak in terms of “unreason,” and to think in terms of a “fourth dimension.” In like manner, I am willing to prophesy, would the philosophic religious writers of today suffer confusion at some future, perhaps far-off day when “personality,” which they deny to God, the Absolute, will be found to be rightly predicated only of God, and not of ourselves.

Aldous Huxley (whom I admire greatly, and whose “conversion” to the meaningfulness of life as shown in his *Ends and Means* astonished and pleased me) labors the point, going out of his way to prove from the experience of the mystics that the ultimate source of being cannot be personal. If any conclusion can be rightly drawn from that experience by the human intellect, I should think it would be just the opposite one: that God alone is personal, and man is not, except in the illusory sense touched on above.

Perhaps our difference, like most differences, comes from a confusion in terms. Huxley takes the term *personality*, I believe, to connote a form; while I accept it in the Aristotelian and Scholastic sense of a self-conscious,

intelligent being which is *sui juris*; that is, to translate badly, which owns itself, as it were, in its own right as an independent, responsible subject of action. Personality was conceived as a “substantial mode” of being (if that means anything to present-day thinkers) and had nothing to do with form in its modern sense, for the angels, who have no form in this sense, were conceived of as personal beings. If Huxley meant by personality something that would make God into a benign and venerable old gentleman with a beard, he is probably right in denying Him this attribution.

A simile may illustrate my meaning. Let us imagine that one of the cells of my body was suddenly awakened out of its ordinary, little consciousness, concerned with the functions and activities of its existence, and was carried up into the larger consciousness of myself. It would be bewildered by the otherness of this larger life; it would know that what were unbelievable mysteries in its smaller life had a perfectly natural explanation when seen from this wider perspective; it would smile at all the systems it had built up to explain its life and the world about it, as being hopelessly naïve and founded on its very limited experience.

When it returned to its ordinary state of consciousness, it would not express to itself in terms of its previous experience the conception of being it had attained during its flight to a higher realm, but would know furthermore that there was a larger life into which its small existence fitted, and that only in terms of that life could its individual life be understood. It could never again attempt to explain reality in terms just of itself. It would bring back with it a conception of a great unity in all the apparent confusion and separation of its earlier experience. Strangest feeling of all, it would begin to realize that the

most fundamental conception of its little consciousness—which made it say to itself: “I am, I live, I act”—was an error, caused by the consciousness of the activities taking place within its organism. Through its flight it had lost this sense of “I,” and now realized it for what it was—a fiction, a figment, created by its own mind as the cause and doer of all that happened within it. It knew now that there was no separate “I,” but that that larger life lived in it and through it. It would recognize this sense of “I” as the source of all its personal unhappiness because it had sought to live in terms of itself and not in terms of that larger life from which, as a center, all things were happening.

It would perhaps conceive of this other life momentarily experienced as its God, and would feel that the height of wisdom would be to surrender this erroneous conception of “I” and say: “Not my will, but Thine, be done.” If it still dared to trust itself to cast its experience in a formula, as was its old custom, it must say: “God is; I am not.” Or in moments of exalted feeling, it might cry out: “I live, yet not I, but God, liveth in me.”

As rest and climate more and more repaired the effects of overwork and dispelled the doctor’s worries that I might succeed to the tuberculosis which had taken two of my sisters, I began to participate in some of the activities and associations of the region. I was a natural-born skater, and learned to ski. Without fear of the sporting dangers of the great Cresta Run, I was often driver of a bobsled. And now and then Nature herself performed for us, without adverse results.

I remember one avalanche that made a spectacular sight as I was scudding along in a sleigh on the near side of a long narrow pass between two ranges of the moun-

tains. As the great mass of snow rushed down the mountainside, to settle in the depths of a gorge, there was a roar like the rumble of tremendous thunder; the air filled with snow dust, which was like clouds of fine-spun tinsel, and it transformed the valleyed aisles and backdrops of the mountains into a fairy-tale setting.

Beginning to move about somewhat among local people and visitors to the Alps, through the Princess Maria von Rohan I became acquainted with that charming English gentleman, the prolific and well-known author Robert Hichens. We were compatible and developed a habit of long conversations. Like so many artists before and since, admiring the beauty and antiquity of the Catholic Church, Hichens was seriously pondering its claims to be the only true church of Christ. I did not determine how strongly it had possession of him, but I discerned that he was at least toying with the idea of submission to Rome. I said nothing to dissuade him, but we discussed with genuine intellectual energy what submission means, as regards acceptance of the dogmatic teachings of the Church. He was somewhat hazy about such practices as confession and indulgences, and I was able to make them reasonable to him through interpretation.

The non-Catholic world is periodically astounded, sometimes almost shocked, by the news that such men, for instance, as Gilbert K. Chesterton have joined the Catholic Church. But the human mind becomes weary in its stormy and lonesome search for truth and is inclined to welcome the haven of security, peace, and the warm feeling of fellowship with other travelers that the Church offers it. Where mental and active types will tend to become interested in the many new cults that have sprung up since the spread of Oriental philosophy

in the West, with its resultant crop of new-thought philosophies and semireligious societies, the more sensitive and deeply feeling types have been drawn inevitably toward the old traditional form of Christianity, with its wealth of beauty and ceremonial, its deep mysticism, its long array of saintly men and women, its strong dogmatic position, which is supported by the ingenious reasoning of so many great minds of the past. Tired of the individual quest, they feel that what was good enough for Francis of Assisi and Thomas of Aquino should be good enough for them, and they surrender with a sense of relief to the appeal of the great mother of all the churches, with its consoling doctrines of redemption, divine grace, the sacraments, and an eternal peace and rest with God after death.

I recall a long discussion Hichens and I had one afternoon in a tearoom on the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich during which he sought an explanation for the Church's teaching on the real presence in the Blessed Sacrament and on several other points.

It was inevitable that we should speak of his novel *The Garden of Allah*, and it gave me a chance to gain some insight into the working of the mind of a creative artist. Of course I was curious how he was able to make his characters say and do the right thing when he could have had no personal experience on which to draw, not only for the larger facts, but for the multitude of little details. I had in mind especially his heroine, Dominie. His dissection of the creative problem extended over several conversations, and what he said has always remained with me.

"When I conceive an idea for a story," he said, "I plan an outline of the episodes, create all my characters, and give careful thought to names for them. Then a strange

thing always happens. The characters come to life seemingly inside me, and I enter into the whole range of experience with them to be covered by the story. In dealing with them, I myself do and say things I never planned or even thought of. Often our acquaintance with each other takes the whole trend of the story out of my hands and changes it, changes the whole plot. It is always a tantalizing stage of work, for I never know what will happen. This happened with me especially in relation to the character of Dominie, both in her life with Boris in the desert and, more particularly, in the tragic climax when she gave him up, sending him back to his monastery. It was Dominie in my mind that caused me to write the ending, which turned out to be unpopular with many readers who prefer that love shall have a happy ending.

"But you see," Hichens concluded simply, gazing out over Lake Geneva from the drawing-room of his hotel in Montreux, "the ending to the story as I wrote it was the only artistic ending. Then too it was the only outcome a devout, believing Catholic could take."

I remember another avalanche while I was at Davos. In the circumstances of my presence in the region the impression it made on me was highly sensitized.

Spring was coming on. The warmth of the sun, the ineffable turning of nature's processes, were loosening the hold on the earth of ice and snow. The railroad from Klosters to Davos ran snug to the base of a towering mountain before reaching the station of Davos Dorf.

On this particular day evidently the jar of the train in motion communicated with sensitive veins in the formation of the upper mountain reaches. It set off an avalanche, which became enormous; no simple slide of surface snows and ice, but a catastrophic stripping of the

winter's accumulation, tearing the mountainside down to the naked bones of its skeletal rocks.

By hideous mischance part of the train reached a spot directly in its path at the moment the monstrous multi-missile began striking the foot of the mountain. Its gathering assault lifted almost the whole train high into the air, flinging it over on its back and hurling it hundreds of feet away, smashing the cars to dust. On and on came the snow and ice, spreading out to cover the wreckage over with a fatal tonnage of frozen weight.

The bells of the valleys and uplands clanged the dread signal understood only too well by all. With almost uncanny immediacy rescue workers flocked to the scene, digging methodically in silence, perchance to recover victims whose lives could still be saved. A rear coach or two had not quite reached the periphery of destruction; torn loose from the train, they were flung aside and overturned, barely eluding the downrushing mass. A few passengers thus escaped with their lives, though they were terribly injured.

The rescuers worked obstinately, using long steel rods to prod the snow foot by foot to locate both dead and living. The sight of stretchers carrying away twisted forms had a solemn effect on me. The thought of summary death, of being violently ushered into eternity without an instant to think, to pray, to prepare, is always a terrible thought for a Catholic, educated to believe that the whole of eternity depends, for happiness or for woe, on whether he is in the state of grace or not at that all-important moment of final summons.

For me, who, if my old religion were true, now stood guilty of that greatest of sins, the considered doubt of my faith, this being hurled into the presence of sudden death in unavoidable circumstances meant inevitably an

even more serious weighing of my position. All protection of the chrysalis state in which I had drifted was gone. Absorbed still in deep spiritual searching, needing quiet and time, I was jerked face to face with sudden and violent death as a fact, the harshest kind of reality.

I asked myself involuntarily: *If one of those bodies were mine, where would my soul be now?*

In the monastery we were accustomed to meditate on death, on our pallet of straw, surrounded by our praying brethren, envisioning ourselves about to appear before the throne of God, under strict judgment to render the account of our lives, even to the smallest idle word. Happy and optimistic by nature though I was, this meditation had invariably filled me with trepidation and fear, even though I was striving my best to love God and keep His commandments.

Now, in the presence of this awful event, confronted by the realization that I had no explanation of life and death and the hereafter, that I did not even know for certain that the Church's explanation was not the true one, the old awe and fear returned, reinforced by the doubting state of my soul, in God's sight.

For several days my being was grievously disturbed. I prayed earnestly to God that, if I were in the wrong, He would give me back my creedal faith, that I might return to my monastery to serve Him faithfully to the end. When I was permitted to go to Davos it was simply for temporary rest, returning thereafter to Rome.

No miracle of conversion, no revelation or illumination came to my rescue. I could only continue along the path my conscience had opened to me.

In earlier days I would have interpreted the disaster of the avalanche, or at least its appearance before my very eyes, as an effort of God to show me the wickedness of

my ways. One of the comforts of a clear, definitely stated creed is that one may always know for a certainty about the essentials of life and death, and what to expect thereafter. But in my state I no longer knew anything about those matters. I had only an undefined but nevertheless strong feeling that things were somehow other than as we conceived them, but that still they were right and meaningful, and that I could not do other than follow my conscience and what light I had.

It is a difficult thing to change the attitudes and habits of a lifetime. Up to this rest period in the Swiss mountains I relied absolutely on my creed for my interpretation of life, and upon my superiors' will and the monastic rule for the direction and ordering of my every activity. Now it was necessary to rely entirely on myself, and for such a crisis my life had not prepared me.

In some ways those few days following the avalanche were perhaps the darkest of my life. They brought me a quality of doubt that deepened as shadow changes to substance. Doubt whether faith might not, as the Church taught, be a gift of God. Doubt whether I had not lost it by infidelity to my duties as a monk, losing the spirit of my calling in the distractions of study and external work in the last few years. Doubt if my doubting were an evil or a good thing. And yet, strange to say, the days did not bring me unhappiness along with the darkness.

It may be that a crucial decision was taken in my subconscious self at this time. But outwardly I adhered to the long habit of taking no definite step, either to the right or to the left, until I saw my way clearly.

After perhaps six months of my stay in Davos, Father General sent my old student and dear friend Father Leo to see how I was progressing. I welcomed him with true

John Tettemer

joy, and we had a few days together, several times driving up and down the valley in a sleigh with tinkling bells.

I felt touched by Leo's visit. Though I cannot recall details of our conversations, I had once been his professor and spiritual director; later we had been colleagues in the International College and were old and trusted friends, so I am sure I asked him to give me news regarding the affairs of our order throughout the world, and especially of the brethren and happenings in Rome.

He could not have but perceived that some great and deep change in Father Ildefonso was in process, and I must have revealed inklings at least of what was happening in my soul. I am sure he was convinced of my sincerity, and that I was acting in conscience. Out of our long friendship, and because his philosophy was deep and mature, he had understanding to give me.

I do not know what he reported to the General when he returned to Rome, but I knew that it could only be discerning and patient. God love him for his understanding! I carry his memory with me as a precious souvenir of a happy and beautiful life.

My health was restored to such a degree that I was able to take quite long walking trips into the mountains and to become acquainted with more people and participate in some of the community social life.

The substance of my doubt had for some time prevented me from receiving the sacraments. Nevertheless, my mind was still in that twilight zone in which I could not settle on any clear convictions upon which to base a reasoned decision, and I still refrained from taking any definite step that would sever my connection with my monastic life.

It was inevitable that Father General would send

Father Leo up from Rome to see me again, to urge a definite and speedy decision. Leo explained what, alas, I already knew.

"Your position outside the cloister for so long a time is getting to be known," he said quietly. "As you well know, it is wholly irregular, uncanonical. You can understand why pressure is being brought to bear on Father General to clarify a situation so anomalous. In justice both to the order and to yourself, dear Ildefonso . . ."

As we walked about the crystalline plateaus, pausing now and then to laugh with children at their games, or to pass the time of day with an Alpine guide on his way to conduct a climb, Father Leo gravely sounded me out about my present attitude. Had it changed in the year since he had seen me? Had this long period of being alone with myself brought me back to my normal acceptance of the Church's teaching? Could I not see my way now to return with him to our monastery, resume my duties as Consultor General of the Passionist Order, and, as a priest, celebrate Mass, hear confessions, teach again the Catholic theology? "Do not ask me to believe, Ildefonso," he said sorrowfully, "that this crisis in your life has only led you further away from us, from your chosen and gifted—yes, gifted, Ildefonso—life in the Church and the order?"

I remember our pausing in an open snow field. The sky was cloudless, and the blue of a bluebird's wing. The sun cast a thin golden illusion over the field of snow. In the distance there was the random tinkle of little bells, the echoes of merry shouting among the angles of mountains.

"Leo, it is as though, by a miracle of transformation, I had been born into some new, open, unbiased world of thought, the farther I am removed from seeing life and

truth in the old way. If you ask me what new truth I have formulated to take the place of the truth of the old faith and philosophy, I cannot answer you. I don't know, Leo. For all I now know, the Church and Aristotle may be right after all. At least it would be easier for me—perhaps in a way for us both—if I could say to you, and to myself, that I have now become persuaded of the utter falseness of the Catholic position. Then I could say that, knowing the Church was wrong, there was nothing for me in conscience but to sever my connection with the Church, with however much sorrow and pain. But I am still torn between a natural tendency and the whole experience of my past, in prayer, not to mention the tradition and environment in which I grew up, toward belief in a supernatural world, and a skepticism as to the form of the belief, as expressed in orthodox religion."

Only one answer was possible for me at that time, and that answer I finally made to Leo. To resume my duties as a Catholic priest and executive of the order required a profession of unreserved and unhesitating belief in the Catholic Church and her teaching. In the persistent state of my doubt I could not honestly make that profession.

"If this is true," said Leo sadly, "there will be nothing left for you to do but ask for honorable release from your vows, and your oath of perseverance binding you to the order, made under the most solemn and considered circumstances."

Leo was all too right. Whether the circumstances in which I now found myself had been brought about through my own fault or not was not the chief question. What mattered was that under changed conditions I would be a hypocrite and untrue to my conscience were I, for the sake of my career in the Church, from my love for the monastic life, or even because of loyalty to pledges

made in other circumstances, to profess an unwavering faith when I did not truly have it.

The decision, Leo reminded me, would at this time concern only my relations with my order. I need not now decide on my ultimate relations with the Church, even though these were the basis of my dilemma. A request for release from my vows and my order would not put me outside the Church. For all intents and purposes I would remain a Catholic who doubted seriously of his faith. The question whether I could find a *via media* whereby I could remain a believing member of the Church was permissible of decision later.

In time Leo left for Rome after an affectionate and sad farewell. If we knew that we might never again meet in the happy life of the monastery, neither of us felt like putting such an outcome into words.

Before a great while longer two other fathers came up from Rome to see me: Father Alfred, my former professor of philosophy during my student years, and Father Eugene, one of the higher superiors of the American Province of the order. Both of these American fathers were longtime friends, loved by me; because of many bonds their visit was a very trying one on both sides.

They were sad at my state and pleaded with me to forget my silly ideas and return home to the monastery. Eugene was so stricken with anxiety that he used an argument which perhaps he should not have used and which was unnecessary in any case, for it was and had been from the beginning of this critical period in my life, ever there at the back of my consciousness. "Remember your mother, Ildefonso," he begged me; "this will break her heart."

How well I knew it! I do not remember what I replied

to this desperate appeal to my heart. My love for my mother had always been great and genuine, and in my later years there had been added a deep reverence for her as a true saint. I think I would have done anything in my conscientious power to keep her from any more suffering in the remainder of her life; like that of most saints, her life had been strangely full of pain and sorrow. I knew that, if she learned of my loss of faith, and that I might leave the monastery, it would cause more suffering than all the rest put together, even including the loss through death of three adored children, at the age of their greatest beauty, and when they were beginning to make a return of that love she had so lavished upon them.

But it was not in my power to change the course of life within my own soul. How small and weak are our little philosophies in the presence of real life itself!

Father Alfred, true to his more philosophical training and character, turned my thoughts back to the world of ideas by asking, logically: "Ildefonso, what are the things you cannot believe, causing you to lose your faith?"

If I have had difficulty in this narrative in explaining my inner state of soul, how much more did I have in those days of trying to make intelligible to my brothers my sweeping change of attitude toward matters of the mind! For it was still so far from clear to myself, what was happening to me.

It was as though I had come to live in another country and had not yet learned its language, if language there were. I could not express myself, and knew moreover that if I did, they could not understand me, for their faith contained no rift or doubt, and that fact alone was as a chain of insurpassable mountains standing between us. I tried to explain that for me the mental world in which

they lived had now become unreal, had lost its meaning; but I could not rightly expect them to understand, for they still lived unquestioningly in a world of Aristotle and abstract thought; and the new world of reality that I thought I glimpsed could have no meaning for them.

Finally, knowing I owed them the consideration of speaking their language, and although I knew it would not do justice to my position, I had to disclose to them that I was thinking in terms of monism; that I could no longer see how the source of all things, Being, Itself, could create anything outside itself, as the dualism of Christianity teaches; for outside Itself there could be only non-being, or nothing.

I think Father Alfred felt that then I was on the brink of being snatched back to salvation, for he roared with laughter, crying: "Surely now, Ildefonso, you haven't forgotten Scholastic philosophy's answer to that old objection! Twenty years ago I taught it you."

"Oh yes," I said, glad of the relief of a smile, "I know the answer, all right; the attribution of 'being' to God and the creature, not univocally, but only analogously; but alas, now the distinction fails to have any meaning for my mind. The whole of philosophy seems to me now to have to do with the world of ideas and words and to fail to touch the heart of reality itself." It touched my heart to see the dejection written on the faces of my brothers as I said the words. "You see the trouble goes deeper than you realize; my faith even in philosophy has gone."

This was really too much for them. It must have sounded like insanity, as though I had said that I could no longer believe that there was a sun, and a moon, and stars. Indeed, something very like this must have passed through their minds, for almost abruptly they rose to

embrace me in a sad gesture that could only be a farewell from which all hope of future reuniting was absent.

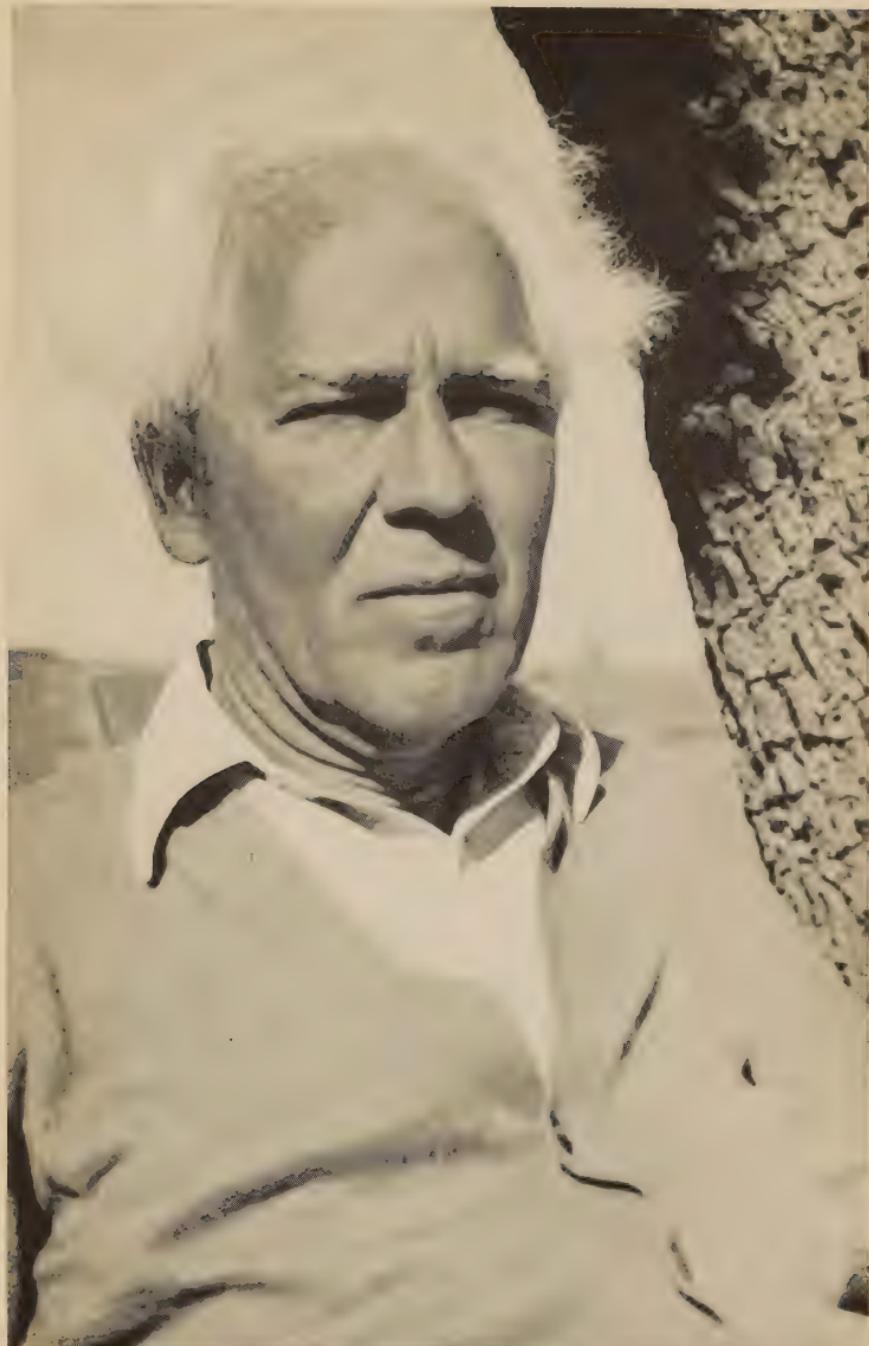
Father Eugene said gravely: "The most charitable thing to conclude is that too much study has unbalanced your mind. We will always pray for you, Ildefonso." Father Alfred's head bent forward heavily, and he said nothing but turned away when he had embraced me in parting.

Dear brothers! How I loved them, for the men they were, and for their efforts to understand me, who only repaid them with pain, however unwillingly! I watched them leave, feeling a twinge of homesickness as I visualized their return to their safe haven, their beautiful and lasting monastic home.

This was the last effort made by argument on the part of my brethren to convince me of my error. Once, many years later, Father Peter, who knew me as a boy and who had received me into the monastery, called upon me and pleaded with me in terms of the affection that was strong between us. "You belong to us, John," he said; "you must return to us. I will resign my position as rector of the monastery at Sierra Madre and have you appointed in my place." Good Father Peter! He, too, believed in me and would joyously have sacrificed himself to bring me home.

These meetings—with Father Leo, Father Alfred, Father Eugene, and Father Peter—were trying meetings for brothers who had long cherished deep affection for each other, yet could not any longer walk together along the same path through life arm in arm, as their hearts would have had it.

Father Leo had explained to me at the last that if I could find no other step, it would be sufficient if I wrote

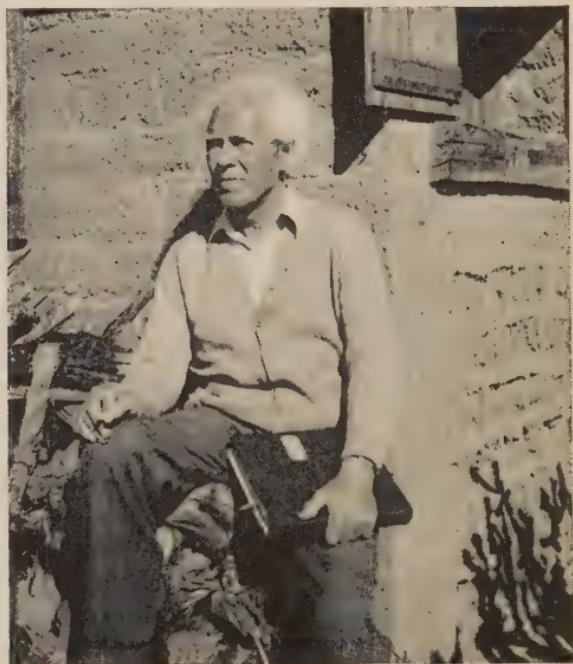


JOHN TETTEMER IN THE LATE 1930'S



JOHN
TETTEMER

" . . AT RANCHO YUCCA LOMA, NEAR VICTORVILLE . . "



a very few lines requesting my release from my order, for reasons explained to him by word of mouth.

And so one day, by a window looking out on snow and ice, and peaceful villages and homes, and the mountains, I wrote the short letter. Although it was the most important letter I had ever written or would write, I do not remember its wording except that I added to the simple statement of fact an expression of regret that the momentous action was inescapable and of a continuance of my love for my brethren.

In due time I received from Rome a long document in Latin declaring formally that for the reasons I had stated, and especially because I requested ("præsertim quia petisti"), I was released from my three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and from my oath to persevere in the order till death.

Thus was closed my life as a monk.

I do not regret one moment of the twenty-five beautiful, peaceful years I lived as a monk—a monk's life; a good monk's life. They were years of aspiration, of study, of zeal, of happiness. Simple honesty and love for truth, planted in me as a child by beloved and God-fearing parents, and watered and nourished by saintly men during my growth to maturity, finally made it impossible for me to remain in that happy home of my youth's dreams and of my mature labors.

I did not leave the monastic life in disillusionment, nor in uncertainty of the rightness of my action for me. I was just as sure that in the sight of God I was taking the right course as I was when I stood at the monastery door at Normandy and asked Father Peter to be admitted into the monastery.

I would not, if I could, change either of those mo-

mentous decisions. I am thankful for each moment of the years in the blessed cloister, where my soul drank deeply of learning, of brotherly love, and of communion with God in contemplation. I am equally thankful for the years that have followed, outside the garden and walls of the monastery to be sure, yet still in God's great cloister, His beautiful world, where the abiding peace of the former has accompanied me in my joy of the unslackened search for truth, of beautiful human love, and of the continuous nearness of God.

I cannot regret one moment of these peaceful later years, living as a simple layman of no church—or should I better say of all churches?—finding life, the quest for truth, the seeking for God more inspiring, if possible, than ever before. I do not feel I have lost one jot of the substance of the experiences through which my soul passed in the earlier half of my life. They are as real to me now as ever they were, just as meaningful.

What I have lost is, I feel, of no importance or consequence; the mere shell, the intellectual background or framework, which I know now was not the real foundation of my life as a monk, but rather a scaffolding that could be removed without damaging the main structure. The scaffolding belonged to the illusory stage of life, seeming essential while the need lasted, but forgotten when it was over.

Who can say where “The End” should be written in the narrative of a life? There is no real end to any story of life, for there is no end to life. For me there have been many turns in the road, landmarks in renewed contacts with old friends, new acquaintances, even harsh experience in the outside world, where the materialistically unlearned monk must needs learn some wisdom of the worldly sort.

I Was a Monk

Out of it all shall I not say to the reader simply: "God
is: I am not."

A NOTE ON THE TYPE

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